

Published by:

- The Institute of Public Relations Malaysia
- CD Communications Group Sdn Bhd

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- The Institute of Public Relations Malaysia

**Design &
Colour Separation by:**

- CD Communications Group Sdn Bhd

Photo Search by:

- Cik Ramlah Johari
- New Straits Times Press
- BERNAMA

Printed by:

- Lai Printers Sdn Bhd

Published in 2003

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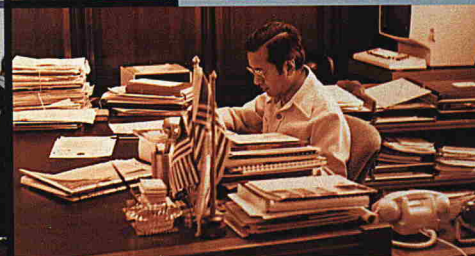
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*Perpustakaan Negara
Malaysia*

WORLD CLASS PUBLIC RELATIONS IN PRACTICE

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HIS MAJESTY, SERI PADUKA BAGINDA YANG DI-PERTUAN AGONG
TUANKU SYED SIRAJUDDIN IBNI AL-MARHUM TUANKU SYED PUTRA JAMALULLAIL
AND HER MAJESTY, SERI PADUKA BAGINDA RAJA PERMAISURI AGONG
TUANKU FAUZIAH BINTI AL-MARHUM TENGKU ABDUL RASHID

INTRODUCTION

THE STANDARD OF MALAYSIAN PUBLIC RELATIONS IS SOMETHING MALAYSIANS CAN BE PROUD OF. BECAUSE OF IT, MALAYSIA HAS BECOME THE MOST DEVELOPED AMONG DEVELOPING NATIONS OF THE WORLD, WITH ITS MULTI ETHNIC SOCIETY, STANDING STABLE, PROSPEROUS, HAPPY AND STRONG. THIS ACHIEVEMENT IS CERTAINLY A RESULT OF DELIBERATE, PLANNED STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS BY THE LEADERS TO GAIN PEACE, PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY WITHIN THE COUNTRY. ONE OF THE MAIN INGREDIENTS IN THE RECIPE OF MALAYSIA'S SUCCESS STORY IS OF COURSE THE HIGH STANDARD OF PUBLIC RELATIONS NURTURED IN MALAYSIANS AND PRACTISED BY ALL QUARTERS.

HIS MAJESTY, SERI PADUKA BAGINDA YANG DI-PERTUAN AGONG TUANKU SYED SIRAJUDDIN IBNI AL-MARHUM TUANKU SYED PUTRA JAMALULLAIL AND HER MAJESTY, SERI PADUKA BAGINDA RAJA PERMAISURI AGONG TUANKU FAUZIAH BINTI AL-MARHUM TENGKU ABDUL RASHID HAVE GRACED THE OCCASION BY THEIR ROYAL PRESENCE AT THE LAUNCHING OF THE BOOK "WORLD CLASS PUBLIC RELATIONS IN PRACTICE – TUN DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD" ON 30 DECEMBER 2003 AT THE SHANGRI-LA HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR. THIS SPECIAL PUBLICATION HIGHLIGHTS TO THE AVERAGE MAN HOW A LEADER PLAYED HIS PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLE EFFECTIVELY, ANALYSED PROBLEMS AND SITUATIONS, PLANNED, STRATEGISED AND INTRODUCED SPECIALLY TAILORED PROGRAMMES TO GAIN THE DESIRED RESULTS FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE MALAYSIAN SOCIETY. THIS PUBLICATION IS A DESERVING TRIBUTE TO THE FOURTH PRIME MINISTER, TUN DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD IN PARTICULAR, AS A ROLE MODEL OF WORLD CLASS PUBLIC RELATIONS, AND TO MALAYSIANS IN GENERAL FOR BEING ABLE TO SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF WORLD CLASS PUBLIC RELATIONS.

THE INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS MALAYSIA HAS TAKEN THIS STEP TO RE-ESTABLISH THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR SUCCESS. MAY ALL LEADERS AND THE MALAYSIAN POPULATION CONTINUE TO UPHOLD EXEMPLARY PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE IN ALL THAT WE DO FOR OUR CONTINUED PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT AND FOR WORLD PEACE.



WORLD CLASS **PUBLIC RELATIONS** IN **PRACTICE**



"The new branding "World Class Public Relations in Practice" acknowledges the consistently high standard of public relations that Malaysian organisations strive to achieve and the Malaysian people spontaneously practice within their multi-ethnic society.

In our tribute to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, IPRM attempts to capture in some small measure the roles played by our fourth Prime Minister as the first public relations person of Malaysia from 1981 to 2003. In doing so, IPRM is making a concerted effort to acknowledge, showcase and champion best public relations practices in the country, and play a more effective role in promoting what is our core business."



MESSAGE by the President, Institute of Public Relations Malaysia Shameem Abdul Jalil

THE Institute of Public Relations Malaysia (IPRM) is pleased to launch our new branding of excellence in public relations practices in this special publication *World Class Public Relations In Practice – Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad*.

The new branding "World Class Public Relations in Practice" acknowledges the consistently high standard of public relations that Malaysian organisations strive to achieve and the Malaysian people spontaneously practice within their multi-ethnic society.

In our tribute to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, IPRM attempts to capture in some small measure the roles played by our fourth Prime Minister as the first public relations person of Malaysia from 1981 to 2003. In doing so, IPRM is making a concerted effort to acknowledge, showcase and champion best public relations practices in the country, and play a more effective role in promoting what is our core business.

IPRM owes its thanks to the participating public relations doyens who have each contributed a chapter on their perspective and analysis of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's multi-faceted public relations role. The book will challenge the traditional borders of public relations, providing food for thought as well as reference for those interested in knowing the subject as it is interpreted in the unique branding of a legendary figure.

IPRM would like to express our deepest gratitude to His Majesty, Seri Paduka Baginda Yang Di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin ibni Al-Marhum Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail and Her Majesty, Seri Paduka Baginda Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Fauziah binti Al-Marhum Tengku Abdul Rashid for having graciously consented to be our Royal Guests of Honour at the launching of this publication. Their Majesties' presence is indeed a reflection of their support for professional and quality public relations not only in business but also in our numerous everyday activities. Good public relations promotes world peace and harmony.

To Malaysia's foremost public relations person (1981-2003), Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, we salute you!



“The Prima Group of Companies is proud to be associated with this project because we appreciate the demands and difficulties of promoting excellence in public relations practice as shown by our fourth Prime Minister. Public Relations is not about popularity or the enhancement of the self. It is essentially about handling people and persuading them to accept our ideas, plans and strategies at whatever level.”

MESSAGE

by Chairman,
Prima Group and Advisor,
Organising Committee
Dato' Hj. M. Ariffin Yusuf

THE Institute of Public Relations Malaysia is to be commended for collating an interesting collection of papers for this special publication World Class Public Relations in Practice in honour of our 4th Prime Minister YAB Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is indeed a statesman par excellence. Tun Dr Mahathir's public relations skills and efforts both in the local and international arena have successfully fronted Malaysia's foray into global economic and diplomatic activities, and greatly enhanced the nation's image.

The Prima Group of Companies is proud to be associated with this project because we appreciate the demands and difficulties of promoting excellence in public relations practice as shown by our fourth Prime Minister. Public Relations is not about popularity or the enhancement of the self. It is essentially about handling people and persuading them to accept our ideas, plans and strategies at whatever level. It is about taking the rough with the smooth. It is about cooperation and collaboration with those that we impact and those that impact us. At the end of the day, it is what clinches business deals and what gives our clients and customers satisfaction. It is Prima's corporate belief that in the course of doing business with our clients and serving our customers at home or abroad, we are continuously promoting and exhibiting ethical public relations practices.

It is our fervent hope that through this joint effort, our admiration and respect for YAB Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is recorded for posterity. We also hope that the ideas and thoughts contained in the various articles in this publication will be shared by the public relations fraternity in Malaysia and worldwide.

"This publication does more than pay tribute to a world class leader. It will also become among the testimony of Malaysia's remarkable standard of public relations and open communication style as exemplified by the way Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad relates and communicates during his 22 years tenure as Prime Minister of Malaysia."



MESSAGE by Managing Director, CD Communications Group Sdn Bhd Shamsimar Yusof

AS a leading Communications Group in Malaysia, CD Communications Group is proud to partner the Institute of Public Relations Malaysia in producing this special publication 'World Class Public Relations In Practice – Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad' to document chapters written by our country's veteran public relations practitioners on the exemplary public relations and communication practices of the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

This publication does more than pay tribute to a world class leader. It will also become among the testimony of Malaysia's remarkable standard of public relations and open communication style as exemplified by the way Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad relates and communicates during his 22 years tenure as Prime Minister of Malaysia. Besides this, it is also one way for CD Communications Group to contribute towards research in the public relations and communication fields with the hope that the younger generation of leaders and students of communication will have one additional great reference to source for in our libraries.

CD Communications Group take this opportunity to record our Group's commitment to contribute towards best practice of the public relations and communication industry in our beautiful country Malaysia at all times.



the **First Public**
Relations Person
of Malaysia

– 22 years at the Helm

by Shameem Abdul Jalil

the First Public Relations Person of Malaysia

— 22 years at the Helm

United States of America's first public relations person is George W. Bush, United Kingdom's Tony Blair, France's Jaques Chirac, China's Zhu Rongji, Indonesia's Megawati Sukarnoputri and the list goes on.

At the time of this publication, the first public relations persons of the countries of the world are being acknowledged for leading various efforts. For instance, USA is remembered for the war against Iraq and questions still abound on the evidence of the alleged weapons of mass destruction and how to reconcile the USA's good intentions of eradicating terrorism and such attacks. UK created a world impact when the Labour Party took the reigns from the Conservatives. France is seen as a strong advocator of world peace and cooperation, Indonesia goes on record for being the first country with world approved sea lanes (ALKI), Philippines concentrates on economic security for their grassroots, China is an emerging world superpower and Malaysia goes on record as an exemplary progressive, Islamic country.

Why do we recognize the Prime Minister as the first Public Relations person of a country? For the simple reason that he is the one relating to his nation and the world outside on behalf of his country. He is chief architect, designer, master planner, spokesperson and the chief executive of the country. It is indeed a severely demanding, non enviable leadership role played by one special human being, subject to scrutiny of the country's population and the world at large.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was Malaysia's First Public Relations Person between 1981-2003. He is the country's fourth and longest serving Prime Minister. He came into office on 16 July, 1981 and retired end of October 2003.

Born in 1925, he is a medical graduate from the University of Singapore. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad came into prominence, first, in 1969, when he was expelled from UMNO, the ruling party, for writing a letter critical of the then Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, through the highly controversial work "The Malay Dilemma". He is married to Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd. Ali and they have seven children.

During his tenure as Prime Minister of Malaysia, the country witnessed excellent public relations practices blooming to life like never before. Public Relations being the oldest profession in this world indeed came very, very far. It is no exaggeration to say that Malaysia sampled all of the best public relations practices as promoted by proven public relations theories for excellent public relations during Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's premiership. Same can be said for his total communication management. And you will see this being substantiated in the chapters written by Malaysian Public Relations doyens in this book.

His role as the first public relations person is put to greater test given the multiracial and diverse ethnic backgrounds of our population. Malaysia with a population of 23 million people has skillfully fostered understanding, cooperation, peace and prosperity within its multicolored boundaries acknowledged and admired by the World.

This status was not attained overnight. The painstaking process has long begun and been painfully built over the years since Merdeka.

We must place on record the excellent communication and public relations skills of all Malaysian Prime Ministers – Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, Tun Hj Abdul Razak, Tun Hussein Onn and Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed, our fourth Prime Minister. They have labored through the years and sacrificed to take Malaysia through good and bad times to be where we are today. A progressive, peaceful and prosperous Malaysia.

TUN DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD'S COMMUNICATION SKILL

He has been described by many as a man who speaks his mind bluntly, honestly, plainly and precisely. **Malaysians and the world have witnessed how skillfully he communicates in sharing his compelling vision.** He utilizes his public relations and communication skills to shape his vision, so substantially put together and made it impossible to resist. Known for his visionary leadership, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad sees very, very far ahead, sometimes to rudely waking the population and educating them about the way to go.

With his forceful vision, he moves on to integrate the effort. He devises several communication mechanisms to ensure integration takes place efficiently with competence, creativity and without fragmentation as well as wastage.

His messages in support of his vision cuts across racial boundaries and unhelpful geography to land clearly in peoples' minds and hearts invoking support and actions.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has shown success in gaining trust because of his honest, consistent, realistic and great follow-through actions.

He is seen by world communities as one who lacks prejudices of the common kinds like racial, sexual, religious and between social classes. Because of these attributes, he is able to communicate and achieve supportive teamwork to sustain a healthy community.

As a decision maker, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad subscribes to the power of listening. This is the first proven step in his great thinking process. And this is his communication style for making intelligent decisions. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is known to investigate for more information about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. He gives the space and time for public opinion after a suggestion and takes his time to finally decide. Ideas and creativity he constantly encourages and clever challenges are thrown to his people. These have invoked notable positive response to the benefit of the country.

Let's consider some other aspects of the Prime Minister's exemplary role in public relations excellence to appreciate him as one of the finest examples of some one who meets the 'hit list' of qualities of an excellent First Public Relations Person a nation is blessed to have in a leader.



Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad led by Chairman of Berjaya Group, Tan Sri Datuk Seri Vincent and Tan Sri Datuk Danny Tan arriving at Berjaya Times Square, which houses Asia's largest indoor theme park

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad displays some notable known attributes of a fine public relations person like:

**ABLE TO SPEAK HIS MIND WITH GREAT CANDOR.
OPEN, HONEST AND BOLD**

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad will be remembered for speaking his mind on many issues whether at national or international forums. He shares his views and opinions openly without fear or favor. He has made some of these statements forthrightly:

"We cannot eliminate racial differences. All we can do is to eliminate economic differences."

"I admire Mr. Shintaro Ishihara for his convincing win in the Tokyo gubernational election. I admire Mr. Ishihara very much for his firmness and outspokenness. I agree with a number of his views but not all. I find it difficult to appreciate his views on China for example."

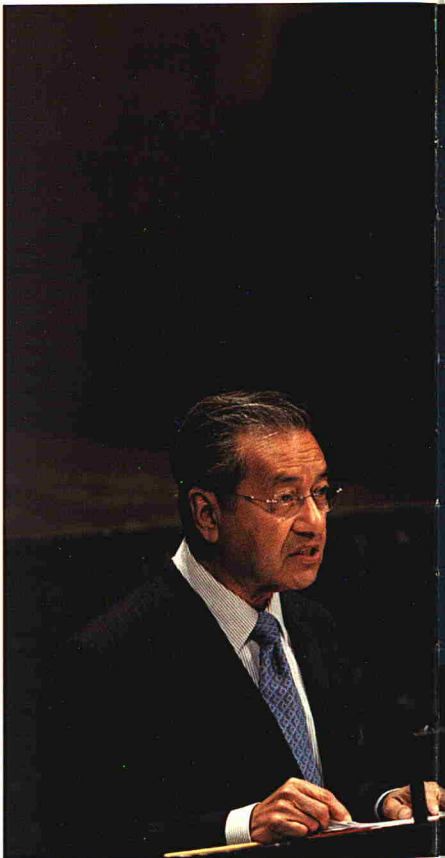
"President Jimmy Carter of the US was the first to declare that the United States would not respect borders when human rights were abused. President Bush believed in this doctrine when he launched the Gulf War. Because of this stance we see today liberal use of sanctions against countries said to be abusing human rights. Clearly the right to intervene is itself subject to abuses."

"Prospering your neighbour is obviously beneficial for you."

"Destroy others and we will destroy something of ourselves."

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad subjected his people and foreign onlookers to open shock treatments. 'Buy British Last', 'Look East Policy', 'Dawn Raid on the London Stock Exchange' by PNB to gain control of Guthrie, Malaysia's very own car 'Proton', and the Anwar-Mahathir saga are some examples of the shock treatments.

He is also a vocal critic of the negative elements of globalisation and liberalisation concepts which are actively preached by the rich nations and the west. This is due to his concern of the ill effects of globalisation namely, the unregulated movement of funds and currencies which can destroy and make even poorer the already poor nations. His final speech at the 58th United Nation General Assembly in New York on 25 September 2003 leaves the world and the superpowers with much thought for self reflection. Among other issues he raised are the following potent thoughts:



"The unipolar world dominated by a democratic nation is leading the world to economic chaos, political anarchy, uncertainty and fear. We are not going to recover, and have peace for as long as threats are used for political and economic reforms that most of the world is not ready for and not willing to accept."

"If we want to have democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, the powerful must demonstrate their commitment to all these noble ideas. And they can begin by restructuring the United Nations, in particular the abolition of the undemocratic single country veto. This should be replaced with a modified veto where two veto powers backed by three other members of the Security Council would be needed to block any United Nations Resolution. But slowly even this should be dismantled in favour of majority decisions in the Security Council."

"The other important agencies of the United Nations must be freed from the domination of any single country. Gradually they should be made more democratic. The free market must be recognised for what it is – a market where the bottom line is paramount. It is not a political force for the disciplining of governments. For the right to exploit world trade, a tax should be levied by the United Nations and used by the United Nations to build needed infrastructure for the poor countries of the world."

"Exchange rates should be fixed by an International Commission based on relevant issues. Apart from a small commission, no profits may be made by speculating or manipulating exchange rates."

"Subsidies by rich countries for the production of food and other products must be forbidden although poor countries may be allowed for a stipulated time to protect their industries and food production."

"The world has lost its way. The world is moving too fast. We need to pause, to take stock of things. There is a Malay saying that when one loses his way he should go back to the beginning. We need to go back to the beginning. If we dare to admit it much of the problems that we face today are due to the arbitrary expropriation of the land of the Palestinians in order to create the State of Israel to solve the European Jewish problem."

Something spoken by Malaysia's First Public Relations person for the world to think about.

UN-GENERAL ASSEMBLY-MALAYSIA
Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister
addresses the UN General Assembly 50th Session at UN Headquarters
in New York 25 September 2003

POSSESSES INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad possesses great individual initiative. He is the one who enhanced dramatically the "Malaysian" brand. He has lived this brand and he evolved this brand and marketed it to the world. The World acknowledges the 'Malaysia Boleh' or the 'Malaysia Can' ideology.

The one to conceive and design Malaysia's grand masterplan, the Vision 2020, to chart the path for Malaysia to attain developed nation status, he took further initiative to educate the people about his vision and where the journey would take them. He is able to bring the nation along with him in the process of change. His public relations embrace a diversity of messages from local to tactical to the general and strategic.



Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad builds upon his initiative to champion for the poor. The policies during his tenure saw eradication of poverty irrespective of race. Incidence of poverty has been reduced from 37.43% to 7.5% and the quality of life has improved in urban centers as well as rural. Enrolment in universities have increased tenfold from 28.611 in 1981 to 211,584 in 2000. The number of companies on the stock market has nearly quadrupled from 253 in 1981 to 846 in 2002. Malaysia is the 18th world's largest trader account.

His personal initiative in daring to dream has also resulted in our country's breathtaking landscape – the world class golf courses, the Petronas Twin Towers, the world's fourth tallest building in Menara KL and of course the magnificent Putrajaya.



1 Final touch – Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad placing a gold-coloured bridge to unveil model of the new Putrajaya Federal Admin Centre – 8 September 1995

2 Putrajaya

3 Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the new Federal Admin Capital of Putrajaya – June 1999

Launched Formula Malaysia Contest
at Dataran Putra in Putrajaya - 15 September 1999



TUN DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD AND MEDIA RELATIONS

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is the Darling of the local media because of his media friendly approaches. The local journalists are accustomed to his style and they appreciate how the Prime Minister takes the time to address the rakyat with clarity and influencing public opinion through both electronic and print media. In fact, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad created history by being the first World Leader to answer questions live on the Internet in 1995.

He is also one man who will not be subjected to intimidation by the foreign media. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's ability to take on the confrontational approach especially of the western media and win the audience over is widely known. His running battle with the western media is also well documented. There's the prominent incident in 1994 when Malaysia placed a ban on British firms from being awarded Government contracts. As a result there was unsubstantiated reports by London's Sunday Times accusing Malaysian Leaders of corruption. The ban on

British firms was reported by a Sunday Times report claiming that a British construction company was prepared to offer Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad a US\$50,000 bribe to secure a building contract. This accusation could not be substantiated upon insistence by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. Andrew Neil, editor of the Sunday Times was subsequently removed. The ban was removed after Neil's removal.

More recently, the New York based Business Week magazine's Editor, Mr. Robert Dowling sent an apology letter to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad over the incident by one of its correspondents sending him a "threatening" letter to interview him. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad refused because Business Week had reported untruths about him and Malaysia in the past. ..

Today, both local and foreign journalists will remember Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad as one person who reminds and challenges them to get the facts and uphold truthful and fair reporting instead of reporting without facts laced with prejudiced judgements and being unfair.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad being interviewed live on TV by Chairman of Communication, National Economic and Action Council Abdul Rahman Sulaiman, editor of Utusan Melayu, Aziz Ishak and senior editor of The STAR, Wong Chun Wai - 15 October





Prime Minister welcoming the Governor of Bank of Japan, Hayami at his office – 27 July

FINANCIAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

This doctor has mastered world class financial public relations and it has been demonstrated for the world to see. There is proven success in his skillful communication with the financial community locally or abroad to present financial solutions that is best for the country. This man does not blindly follow the herd instinct. When Malaysia faced the 1997 regional financial crisis, the Prime Minister spared no mercy on greedy world currency traders who created havoc on the economies of developing countries. He stood a lonely hero to save his country when he decided to impose selective capital controls to shield the economy from external threats. Currency traders like George Soros was forced to eat humble pie when Malaysia registered an impressive growth of 6.1 percent in 1999 proving that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had prescribed the right potion to cure Malaysia's economic woes.

Vatican City - 7 June
Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad having
an audience with Pope John Paul II at his private study room



OUR GLOBAL IMAGE MAKER

If you go around the world where previously Malaysia is unheard of, today, Malaysia is already well known to them independently on its own identity. No more as Singapore's neighbour. In fact in that period, it is most synonymous with one name - Mahathir.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is often described as the 'genius of a New Asian Order'. He is Malaysia's Chief Ambassador to the World and he is the one who woke Asians to face European domination. He is not ashamed to cry aloud for Japan to continue to lead so that we have a stronger East Asia. Or to shake his own nation on the 'China Agenda'.

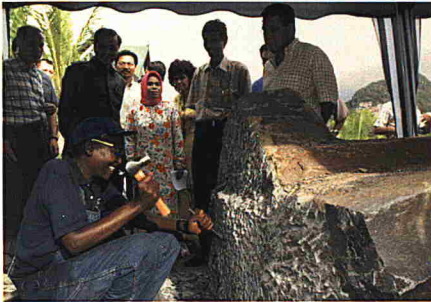
As Prime Minister, he brought Malaysia around the world like never before. The number of foreign missions has increased from 89 in 1981 to more than 300 currently reflecting the friendly and trading relations Malaysia has with foreign nations.

Malaysia is also the host to more than 2 million foreign workers a, situation not associated with developing countries.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has also visited many faraway lands to introduce Malaysia and establish ties the former social republic of Ukraine identifying it as possible gateway to eastern Europe. He has shown support and visited Myanmar giving it hope to prosper and to address the house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi. He also improved Malaysia's ties with Germany. Today, Malaysia has ties with Russia over our space venture. He also established smart dialogues with Africa since 1995 to change mindsets. And he honoured the Vatican City and Pope John Paul II with a visit to enhance Islam and Christianity as two of the world's greatest and most peaceful religions. Even South pole witnessed Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's footprints and saw the Malaysian flag.

US President George W. Bush (R) welcomes the
Prime Minister of Malaysia Mahathir Mohamad (L) at
the Oval Office in the West Wing of the White House
14 May 2002 in Washington, DC





The image of Islam cannot be rosier than when Islamic countries like Malaysia continue to lead the way to promote its principle of peace, moderation and progress for one and all irrespective of race and religion. In fact it has been said that Malaysia as an Islamic state does not fit the stereotype and labels tagged to developing countries and Islamic nations. Other than having many characteristics like those that exist in the first world countries, its per capita income has increased by some 330% from RM4,022 in 1981 to RM13,272 in 2002.

These are among a much longer list of reasons why we brand Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad the image maker of Malaysia. In conclusion, we appreciate the great understanding of communication fundamentals of our First Public Relations person, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he was playing the role of the First Public Relations person of Malaysia between 1981 to 2003. His honesty has earned him credibility here and abroad. His openness and consistency of actions has secured the rakyat's trust and confidence. His untiring and continuous communication to build relationships has helped prevent alienation towards government policies and his ability and efforts in continuous image analysis and corrective adjustments in behaviour and communication has enabled Malaysia to make changes while allowing adjustments to settle in.



1	2
3	

1 Work in progress... newly arrived Zimbabwean Sculptor Gerald Takawira, 39, carefully chipped the base of this eight-tonne springstone which was flown in especially from the great DYKE in his country to create a four-metre art piece entitled the window of opportunity. Sculpted in the shape of a hand holding a window to represent former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir's achievement in bringing development to the country during his tenure, the piece will be part of the landscape at the Galeria Perdana in Langkawi. Dr Mahathir who was on a one-day trip to Langkawi yesterday, dropped by to have a look at the piece. Accompanying him were Syed Hazak (left), Bakar (second from right) and Maju Holding Sdn Bhd's Executive Chairman Tan Sri Abu Salih Mohamed (extreme right)

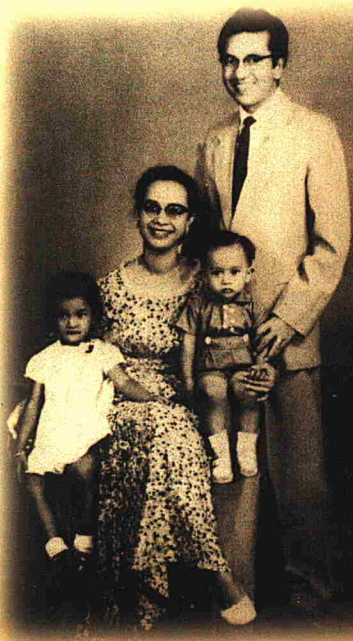
2 Chinese President Jiang Zemin (L), shakes hands with Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Dr Mahathir Mohamad at Boao of Hainan province, Monday, 26 February 2001

3 Japan-Malaysia-Koizumi-Mahathir-Chat Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi (L) chats with his Malaysian counterpart Datuk Dr Mahathir Mohamad (R) prior to their talks at Koizumi's official residence in Tokyo 8 June 2001

A large, multi-generational family group photo is the central focus of the page. The group, consisting of men, women, and children of various ages, is posed in front of a traditional, two-story house with a tiled roof. The photograph has a warm, aged, sepia-toned appearance. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

A **CARING** Father WITH A **SENSE** of Humour

Widely known to be a remarkable son, husband, father, uncle, grand dad



And all these, and much more, stemming from his love for his country and the peoples of Malaysia. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad ended his last Budget Speech for 2004 with a special heart rendering poem dedicated to Malaysia:

**An Effective Public Relations Personality Checklist
Exemplified By Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad:**

- upholds the truth
- factual and objective
- observes ethical communication
- able to write and speak clearly
- positive and optimistic
- loves to listen
- able to manage issues
- able to strategise
- enjoys reading in diverse areas
- action-oriented and able to deliver
- curious about many things
- adept in use of words
- high energy level
- quickly absorb and retain information
- flair for showmanship
- strong creative urge
- able to gain confidence of others
- enjoy helping people
- determined to complete projects
- respect others' viewpoints
- perceptive and sensitive
- can cope with sudden emergencies
- good sense of humour
- well groomed and businesslike in appearance
- bounces back easily after mistakes
- friendly and able to relate with anybody
- can keep a conversation going with anybody
- considerate and tactful
- take frustration and rejection in stride

*Because of you Malaysia
We uphold the nation, unite the people
We set a thousand steps forward
Together we strive in darkness, riding the waves
Seeking for the light, reaching for the dream
Defying a million obstacles
Though we may fall
We shall persevere to achieve our vision
Peaceful is my country
Blessed with success, bestowed with prosperity
United we stand, resolute in determination
Glow the spirit of patriotism
The world has acknowledged
Our dignity has been upheld
No more aggression
No more humiliation
Our independence enshrined
Peaceful is my country... Malaysia*

*A truly exemplary First
Public Relations person
of a Nation. A man, simple,
down to earth, hardworking,
knowledgeable, focused,
creative, imaginative,
determined, resilient,
sociable and caring.
This man, Mahathir
Mohamad, thus becomes an
epitome of excellence in
global public relations*



The trishaw that was used to peddle Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to school

The house Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was born in

Memories... The Tun's favourite bicycle

About The Writer

Shameem Abdul Jalil is the Corporate Communications Director of Public Bank.

She holds a masters degree in Communications Planning from the University of Wolverhampton, United Kingdom and a first degree from the School of Mass Communications UTM, Malaysia. She was first employed by Maybank as Public Relations Officer where she served for 8 years and then moved on to Kumpulan Guthrie where she received a scholarship to pursue her masters degree. Five years later, Public Finance employed her as the Senior Manager of Marketing Communications Division for seven years before she was absorbed by Public Bank in her current position.

She has served on the Council of the Institute of Public Relations Malaysia for five years where she introduced and chaired the "Anugerah Kristal IPRM" to select exemplary Malaysian Public Relations projects. She has co-authored the first publication by the institute on Exemplary Malaysian Public Relations Cases. Subsequently, the "Most PR Savvy CEO Award" was also introduced and chaired to select the most public relations savvy chief executive officer. To encourage quality reporting for newsletters, she took the chair for The Best Newsletter Award which was introduced in the year 2000. Shameem now serves as the President of the Institute of Public Relations Malaysia. She is also a member of the Malaysian Chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators.





Public Relations and Human Rights

by Dato' Mohd Hamdan bin Haji Adnan

Public Relations and Human Rights

As a human being one would like to enjoy being born free and equal in dignity and rights. One would expect one's government to protect one's right as a human being. It is generally recognised that the practical task of protecting human rights is primarily a national one, for which each State must be responsible. It is generally believed that within countries, human rights can be best protected and enhanced through adequate laws, an independent judiciary, the enactment and enforcement of individual safeguards and remedies, and the establishment and strengthening of democratic institutions.

In Malaysia, the Federal Constitution provides for an independent judiciary. However, government action, constitutional amendments, legislation, and other factors are seen to undermine judicial independence and strengthen executive influence over the judiciary in the country. A country report on Human Rights Practices – 2002 on Malaysia released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour, U.S. Department of State, 31 March 2003 noted that although reforms instituted by the new Chief Justice in 2001 appeared to have led to some improvements, many observers expressed serious doubts about the independence and impartiality of the judiciary.

On this issue, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the fourth and the longest serving Prime Minister of Malaysia when launching the second Human Rights Day (9/9/02) said that only the previous week the authorities had lost their case in the pursuit of security implementation under the Internal Security Act when the highest court in the land decided to decide for the detainee on grounds which only the deciding Federal Court judges deem justifiable. According to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad that decision speaks volumes in deflecting the hitherto unjustified and lopsided view that the judiciary in Malaysia has been subjected to an array of strident and biased comments from many a quarter. He went on to say: "Some rights are certainly not right whilst some human rights are certainly not humanely just especially so when seen in actual context and practice."

In Malaysia, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms is guaranteed in the Federal Constitution. It is consonant with the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948. However, the Malaysian Government under Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's leadership believes that human rights and fundamental freedom would be meaningless if the country is destabilised by social, political and economic chaos.

Malaysia under Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had established a National Human Rights Commission widely known by its Malay acronym SUHAKAM. It is interesting to note that Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, the Foreign Minister, under whose purview the National Human Rights Commission Act is placed, in his presentation to Parliament (Dewan Rakyat) of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia Bill, 1999 in his first sentence itself strongly emphasised that the formation of the Commission is not a public relations exercise.

At the National Consultation on SUHAKAM. After One Year organised by Era Consumer and SUARAM on 5 May 2001, Dato' Param Kumaraswamy, Special Rapporteur, United Nations, had rejected the rumour or talk that the formation of SUHAKAM was actually just a PR exercise as the result of the Anwar Ibrahim and the "Black Eye Saga". According to Kumaraswamy, Tan Sri Razali Ismail, who was then the Permanent Representative to the United Nations had told him in 1995 that the Malaysian Government was interested in forming a human rights commission. However, he said that there was a delay for one reason or another and there were also some obstacles. The former SUHAKAM Vice-Chairperson, the late Tan Sri Musa Hitam, said that it took Musa Hitam six years to convince the Government of Malaysia to form a Human Rights Commission. In 1993 Malaysia became a member of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) and Tan Sri Musa Hitam was appointed to represent Malaysia. He was elected Chairman for the 1995 session. Musa Hitam had gone around the world to speak about human rights since his involvement with UNCHR and strongly felt that it would be proper for Malaysia to have such a Commission.

Syed Hamid stressed that the Government's decision to establish SUHAKAM should be welcomed by everyone and through it, human rights issues can be widely and openly discussed. It is an important channel for the public to submit complaints of infringements and violations of human rights that occur. Actually, the law enabling the formation of SUHAKAM is welcomed by all parties, the government, the opposition, the non-governmental organisations and the people.

Syed Hamid also stated that the "Paris Principles" had been used as the guideline for the proposed Human Rights Commission of Malaysia. He said that the independent status of the Commission was given priority and regarded by the Government as the main feature that would ensure the credibility of the proposed Commission and its acceptance by the public.

It must be noted that adherence to The Paris Principles is crucial in getting SUHAKAM recognised internationally and to be accepted as a member of human rights regional groupings and United Nations-related bodies. SUHAKAM's acceptance as a member of the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions reflected that generally it has been seen as adhering to the Paris Principles. According to Tikamdas (2002, 39) SUHAKAM's membership in this regional human rights group will ensure continued commitment and compliance with the Paris Principles of independence, autonomy from government, pluralism, a broad mandate based on universal human rights standards, adequate powers of investigation and sufficient resources.

The Paris Principles were developed at the first International Workshop on National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Paris from 7 to 9 October by the commissioners of the national human rights commissions (NHRC) of several countries. They reflect the collective wisdom of these commissioners as to the essential preconditions for the effective functioning of national human rights institutions. The basic elements of the Paris Principles are:

- The comprehensiveness of the mandate;
- The pluralist representation, capacity and commitment of the commissioners; and
- The independence of the NHRC.





The Prime Minister chatting with Tan Sri Musa Hitam at the Hari Raya open house of the Foreign Affairs Ministry in Wisma Putra. Also present was Indonesia's Ambassador, Dr Hadi Wayarabi Alhadar

Further, for the acceptance of the Malaysian Human Rights Commission globally, it was imperative to relate it to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). As such the Human Rights Commission Act 1999 (Act 597) referred to the UDHR and given due consideration in accordance with the Federal Constitution. Section 4 of the Act refers to the UDHR: "For the purposes of this Act, regard shall be had to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 to the extent that it is not inconsistent with the Federal Constitution. The Act 597's interpretation of "human rights" refers to fundamental liberties as enshrined in Part II of the Federal Constitution which is seen as too limiting.

Here, Shad Faruqi, a human rights scholar (1999, 153-154) noted that the narrow definition of "human rights" in Act 597 conflicts with Malaysia's international posture on what this concept means. Malaysia has always articulated a composite and holistic view of fundamental rights as encompassing not only political and civil liberties but also socio-economic and cultural rights including freedom from poverty. Faruqi felt that the restrictive definition of human rights in Act 597 reflects an error of jurisprudence.

However, according to Faruqi (1999, 154) despite its jurisdictional limitations, SUHAKAM may still be inspired to look beyond the confines of Part II of the Federal Constitution because of an admirable provision in section 4(4) of its enabling law. Section 4(4) allows regard to "be had to the UDHR to the extent that it is not inconsistent with the Federal Constitution." Furthermore, according to Faruqi: "Many Articles of the UDHR have no counterpart provisions in Part II of the Constitution nor are they in conflict with anything in Malaysia's basic law. SUHAKAM has so far looked beyond its confines in interpreting human rights.



On one of his campaign trails where the people jump for joy to shake his hands

At his speech on the launching of Malaysia's second Human Rights Day Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad noted that although certain quarters may view the Federal Constitution differently, certain fundamental liberties are enshrined in its Part II. Besides Articles 5-13, which grant civil and political rights, there are numerous constitutional rights such as the right of citizens to sue their Government (Article 69 and 167), the right to vote (Article 119), and protection against racial discrimination in public service (Article 135). There are also ordinary laws that provide protection of human rights such as the Aboriginal Peoples Act, Employment Act, Domestic Violence Act, Education Act, Environmental Act, Workmen's Compensation Act and others.

Nevertheless, according to Tikamdas and Rachagan (1999,184), such a formulation of the Act 597 has a number of important consequences. For example, no provision is made for the incorporation of any rights that accrue by virtue of Malaysia ratifying any of the international conventions on human rights. Malaysia remains one of the few nations yet to ratify or accede to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Act also does not seek to incorporate even the human rights covenants that had been ratified into the rights that the Commission will promote and protect.

Nevertheless, Article 4(1) of the SUHAKAM Act provides as follows:

- To promote awareness of and provide education in relation to human rights;
- To advise and assist the Government in formulating legislation and administrative directives and procedures and recommend the necessary measures to be taken; and
- To recommend to the Government with regard to the subscription or accession or treaties and other instruments in the field of human rights;
- To inquire into complaints regarding infringements of human rights.

Members of the Commission are also given the power to visit places of detention and issue public statements relating to human rights as and when necessary. Initially, SUHAKAM's ability to visit detention centres was doubted. A much quoted example was SUHAKAM's first attempt to visit ISA detainees. It took several official requests and seven weeks before four commissioners were finally allowed to meet with the ten ISA detainees and that too under strict police supervision, which could not guarantee a fair investigation. Now, SUHAKAM's ability to visit detention centres, which include police lock-ups, prisons and temporary detention centres run by the immigration departments is greatly improved. In many instances, there have been just walk-ins and despite this, it is given the full cooperation of the authorities. It is hoped that the fear of SUHAKAM not getting a true picture of what is actually happening in the detention centres in the country will be diminished. SUHAKAM had also visited the psychiatric hospitals that house forensic patients as well as old folks homes and children's centres.

SUHAKAM must submit an annual report to Parliament. In its fourth year of existence it had already send its third annual report as stipulated by its Act. Some of the proposals in its annual report are being considered positively. Others not so, as its first annual report to Parliament recommended, among others, a review of oppressive laws and ratification of fundamental instruments of human rights, the government responded that it was not bound by the recommendations as national security was the duty of the Government and the police and not SUHAKAM.

However, it is hoped that SUHAKAM, through its role in creating awareness and providing education on human rights issues to the public, will increase the level of awareness and understanding on human rights among Malaysians.

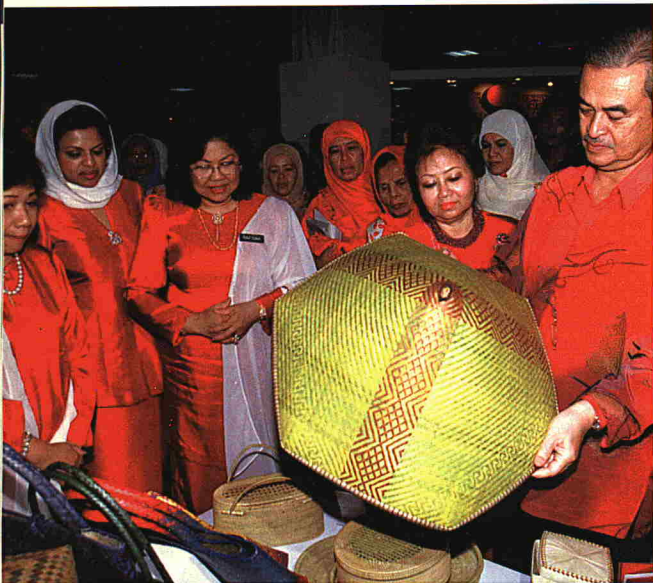
Syed Hamid in his presentation to Parliament also said that the international community has recognised Malaysia's position on human rights. Malaysia was a member of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights from 1993 to 1998. In 1995, Malaysia was elected to Chair the Commission. Hence, according to Syed Hamid, in addressing human rights issues, Malaysia's position has always been based on the following principles:

- Full commitment to the basic principles of the International Bill of Human Rights and other human rights instruments. However, their application would need to take into account the country's values;
- Belief that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and inter-related;
- Upholding the principles of objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity;
- Rejecting politicisation and selectivity of human rights;
- Rejecting the use of human rights as a conditionality for financial and development assistance as a trade protectionist measure;
- Full observance and respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as non-interference in the internal affairs of States; and
- Supporting the right to development as an universal and inalienable right and as an integral part of fundamental human rights.

Currently, Malaysia is a signatory to six human rights instruments and has ratified five of them. As a result of the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Malaysian Government had amended the Federal Constitution to ensure that no form of discrimination against women exists in the Constitution. Also, as a consequence of ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Children, the Education Act was amended to ensure compulsory schooling for children.

According to Syed Hamid, the Government is considering the other 19 instruments of the 25 instruments relating to human rights as formulated and adopted by the United Nations. Nevertheless, the Malaysian non-governmental organisations in their 1999 Joint NGO Memorandum called for the immediate ratification of major human rights covenants and conventions, specifically the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention Against Torture. SUHAKAM has also recommended that these basic covenants and conventions be ratified in its first annual report to Parliament in April 2001.

A very basic concern raised by the NGOs in the 1999 Joint NGO Memorandum was the effectiveness of SUHAKAM existing under the a restrictive legal and political environment that is not in congruence with international human rights standards. A clear example is the four emergencies invoked between 1969 and 1979 which remain legally operational. Efforts are being made to revoke the four Emergencies.



The Ministry for Women & Family Development was set up during Tun Dr Mahathir's tenure. Seen here Datin Seri Abdullah and cabinet members inspecting the quality of handicraft produced by women

SUHAKAM's Annual Report 2002 (2003, 20) noted that the effects of September 11 and war against terrorism pose a particular challenge to human rights defenders. As Governments in many parts of the world engage in the war against terrorism, the delicate balance between national security and fundamental liberties has been recalibrated in favour of national security. As a result, human rights standards in many countries have become collateral damage in the larger war against terrorism.

As such, human rights today have become a very powerful instrument. Superpowers invoking human rights can do almost anything with impunity. They can put sanctions or boycotts on any nation labelled as not honouring them and even invade sovereign countries and depose its leaders without regard to world public opinion protesting against their undemocratic if not inhuman acts. Such was the case of the United States government and its allies with regard to invading Iraq in the name of democracy and human rights. In this process, they have killed innocent civilians, including women and children, thus depriving them of the "mother" of human rights, the right to their life, which the United States and the British leaderships conveniently and inhumanely attributed to collateral damage.

But what are human rights and why are they such a powerful force today? It has been generally accepted that human rights are literally, the rights that one has simply because one is human. They rest on nothing more than being human, are universal, equal, and inalienable. According to SUHAKAM's leaflet: "Human rights are the inalienable rights and freedom that every person is entitled to by virtue of being human. They ensure the dignity and worth of the person and promote human well-being. They are universal, indivisible and interdependent. This means, these rights belong inherently and equally to each person on this earth and are not conferred by, or subject to, any governmental authority. SUHAKAM's leaflet further noted that rights must be exercised with responsibility. This means that:

- Rights are exercised in such a manner that they do not infringe on the rights of others;
- The state has a responsibility to take steps to ensure that its citizens are able to enjoy their human rights; and
- The citizen has a right and a responsibility to take action against any human rights violation.

However, this deceptively simple idea has profound social and political consequences.

It must be emphasised that human rights are not a monopoly of any country, society or religion. All societies have their own notions of justice, fairness, dignity and respect. The idea that all people deserve to be treated according to universal norms can be found in ancient civilisations and the teachings of the world's great religions. A variety of the world's cultures, including ancient Babylon, Greece, Rome and India have something pertinent to human rights. For example, the Indian classics outline the notion of "dharma" or rules of righteousness – the obligations that required rulers or leaders to be impartial towards their subjects and to protect them from hunger, cold and sickness. Buddhist teachings with their goals of promoting the equality of all human beings have strong elements of human rights that influence their development. Islamic laws as early as the 12th century discussed principles that today many people assume derive from "human rights" such as: supremacy of the law, judicial independence, democratic participation, rights of women and the dignity of labour.

The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in June 1993 attended by 171 countries "debated" out the so-called "Asian" and "Western" Understanding on rights. The Declaration that was adopted in Vienna reaffirmed the following:

"Emphasising that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which constitutes a common standard of achievement for all people and nations, is the source of inspiration and has been the basis for the United Nations in making advances in standard setting as contained in the existing international human rights instruments, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights..."

"The World Conference on Human Rights reaffirms the solemn commitment of all states to fulfil their obligations to promote universal respect for, and observance and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, other instruments relating to human rights, and international law. The universal nature of these rights and freedom is beyond question".

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's views of human rights are very clear. While he had firmly believes in human rights, he strongly feels that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the backbone of the International Bill of Human Rights should be reformed. The UDHR that was adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948 had 48 nations in favour of it, eight abstentions and none against it even then was obviously not a consensus. It was the product of the Allied victors, even though the final draft had input from the delegates of Chile, China, Egypt, India, Iran and Lebanon.

Daim Zainuddin, a former Finance Minister of Malaysia in echoing Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's sentiment said that a document that was a considerable extent, determined by the superpowers of that day can hardly remain valid in a vastly changed world more than 50 years later.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's forceful and direct manner in denouncing the unfairness around the world is not always welcomed by some parties, especially the foreign media which is seen to be more inclined to portray a wrong picture of Malaysia. His views on the Western style of democracy and human rights had often found him to be labelled as authoritarian and dictatorial. However, as a long serving leader and statesman his thoughts and ideas are much sought after including by the rest of the world.

In 1997, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had suggested that the UDHR should be revised to make it more relevant to developing nations. He argued that the nations that signed the UDHR more than 50 years ago did not understand the needs of developing countries. According to the Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad the priority of poor countries is not so much of freedom but more food supply and other resources, and even if (the citizens of those countries) do not get to vote they get to eat, that is enough. Furthermore, he pointed out that the UDHR

was signed by only roughly one-quarter of the member countries that belong to the United Nations today, so it cannot possibly represent the points of view of developing nations or the newly emerging countries.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in his book "The Malaysian System of Government" made explicit his views on human rights. He asserted: "Malaysia does not wish to accept western ideas about workers and their rights or for that matter human rights as interpreted by the West. This does not mean that we rejected human rights altogether. It simply means that we do not agree to the western interpretation of human rights (1995: 74)." Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad added: "Simply put, we believe in the well-being of the majority while respecting the rights of the minority or the individual to do as they wish as long as they do not negate the rights of the majority. The West believes in the rights of the individuals, even if in the exercise of these rights they negate the rights of others (1995: 74)."

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad added: "In the West, the individual's right of free speech is exemplified by the famous saying, 'I disagree with what you say but I will defend your right to say it.' This sounds very noble. At the time this statement was made the difference was about minor political beliefs. No real harm was done simply because one differed from the other (1995: 74)."

He then asked: "But what if individuals instigate violence through inflammatory speeches? What if these individuals destabilise society? What if these individuals subvert segments of the community? What if these people act in concert to violently overthrow legitimate Governments? (1995: 75)"

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in his same book reaffirmed: "We in Malaysia have nothing to be ashamed of. Our democracy and our concepts of human rights and freedoms are as honourable as any. Indeed in many ways we are more liberal. For example we allow the setting up of schools using other than the national language and we finance them even. But in practically all these liberal democracies of the West other languages and other religions are effectively obstructed. In one 'liberal' country even wearing a head scarf by Muslim girls in school is forbidden. (1990, 77-78)" In fact, this happened in a number of so called 'liberal' nations.



Marina Mahathir talk on AIDS at St John Church

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the second Malaysian Human Rights Day organised by SUHAKAM on 9 September 2002 in his opening speech reiterated his firm views of human rights and democracy. He declared: "There can never be absolute freedom. Such liberty will only lead to anarchy. Unless the government places limited restrictions to certain rights, individuals can abuse these rights and create moral degradation such as killing unborn and young children. In addition, in upholding his or her rights, the person has also to respect the rights of others."

At the same occasion Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad reflected on Article 8 of the Bangkok Declaration which reflects the Asian states view of human rights. The Article says "that while human rights are universal in nature, they must be considered in the context of a dynamic and evolving process of international norm-setting, bearing in mind the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds". Here Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said: "The Western concept of rights differs from that of Asian countries. While the West places the rights of the individual before the interests of the group or society, Asian culture places society above self. The Internal Security Act, which has vehemently been condemned by the West, is necessary to safeguard the nation's security and hence provide protection for the vast majority. We don't have to be apologetic about our endeavour to uphold rule of law whilst maintaining a disciplined stand in maintaining security and law and order." It is here that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad differs with Musa Hitam his former Deputy (1981-1986) and the first Chairman of SUHAKAM (2000-2002) as well as the past Chairman of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (1994-1995), who said that the human rights conceptions concern ideas based on morality. "Therefore they should mean the same thing to every man. The world community is one undivided family. The general principles underlying human values are common to all members of that family. For the sake of humanity in general let no one create divisions within that family (1999, 6)".

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, at the launching of the second Malaysian Human Rights Day blasted certain countries for preaching lofty tenets of rights while at the same time they are at liberty unilaterally to declare war on others without even having to abide by the very standards of international

law. According to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (even before Iraq was attacked/invaded by the United States and Britain) the right of might has surfaced in place of the right to deliberate via accepted international norms. Hence, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad believed that we must thus be afraid to say what is right for human rights in our country (Malaysia) and rights must always be seen in the larger context of the quality of life for the community and not just pegged on the ideals of 1948 which even the United Nations have not been able to effectively implement."

Here, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad also quoted the Article 1 and 2 of the UDHR which he felt reminded him so poignantly of the history of the United States when Blacks were slaves and had no rights whatsoever. In fact, according to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the whole Declaration contains rights that were denied to the Blacks when they were slaves. Thus, the UDHR was probably drawn against the backdrop of the American history. Nevertheless, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad concluded that despite its historical link, the UDHR, nonetheless, encompasses rights essential to the well-being and dignity of human beings.

At the 6th Nikkel Shimbu International Conference on "The Future Of Asia" (2000) Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad complained among many other things about how human rights are being propagated: "We must learn not to be fanatical especially now, now that the Information Age has descended on us. We talk now of globalisation, the borderless world. We talk of deregulation, liberalisation and transparency. We talk of human rights and of democracy. These are great ideas whose time have come. We must all accept them. The great democrats who believe in freedom and human rights tell us that if we don't accept them then we will face sanction. Our people will starve to death. So don't play with these democrats. Accept democracy and human rights or you will know how we democrats will take away your rights and your freedom of self determination by force. Somehow I think there is something not quite logical with this way of propagating democracy and human rights (2001, 113)".



"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control."

It is too clear that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's inclination of human rights is very development oriented, economically and socially. He is very proud that the Malaysian Government works hard towards scientific, technological and economic progress so that Malaysians can enjoy quality of life. He claims that in the UDHR, this aspiration of his Government is adequately reflected in Article 25 as stated below:

One of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's favourite questions was: "Is it possible for the Government to provide a standard of living that includes good healthcare, proper housing, sufficient food and necessary social services without economic progress and success?" His familiar answer had been: "Political unrest, lack of national security and threats to one's safety do not only keep investors away but will also reduce productivity immensely. History has taught us to understand that anarchy and unrest lead to a lowering in living standards, induce poverty and produce misery. I wonder how many of us prefer to live in a country troubled by internal conflicts and violence to one that is harmonious and safe. Proponents of human rights insist on the indivisibility of human rights. Show me a country that is able to sustain an adequate standard of living without maintaining law and order. Nevertheless, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad also said that in spite of the importance his Government gives to security, it allocates only 9.8 percent of the total development allocation to the security sector, compared to 34.1 percent given to the social sector.

Furthermore, he said that his Government has taken measures to improve the quality of life of all Malaysians, not just that of the hardcore poor. Construction of low and medium-cost houses will continue to be a commitment of his Government. These homes will either be for sale or for rent to those who are eligible. It also includes efforts to increase the quality of life through measures to improve air and water quality, efficient management of waste (included industrial waste), development of healthy urban environment, and conservation of critical natural habitats and resources.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is also very proud of the fact that his Government is viewing education as a very important tool for the development of Malaysians and the progress of the nation. In the Eighth Malaysia Plan, 20.6 percent of the total development allocation is assigned to education and training programmes, giving education and training the major share of the allocation for the social sector, which is 34.1 percent. The thrusts of the education and training programmes in the Eighth Malaysia Plan are increasing accessibility, improving quality and reducing performance gap between rural and urban

children. The Government's investment in human capital spans across a range of abilities. Although 39.3 percent of the allocation for education and training programmes goes to tertiary education, the Government has established community colleges throughout Malaysia to provide hands-on training for school dropouts, school leavers, workers and the public. His Government also has gone a step further in ensuring all preschool children have access to quality preschool education.

As such, Harun Hashim, SUHAKAM's former vice chairman, at his presentation during the National Consultation on SUHAKAM: After One Year (5/5/01) had commented: "So, in Malaysia, when we talk about human rights, we are really talking about freedom of speech. There is freedom of speech mentioned in the Constitution, which is practised by a lot of people. What the Constitution does not guarantee is freedom after speech. Then there is also the issue of the right to assembly. However, our economy is good, and socially and culturally we are okay, Malaysians are at a much higher level in respect of human rights than are many other countries in the world that are still labouring, grasping, fighting and struggling for basic human rights. Right to food, right to shelter, right to education, right to health, these are all parts of the UDHR."

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had clearly declared that compared to many nations, Malaysia remains in the forefront in the line up of safeguarding human rights. Among the ASEAN countries, Malaysia is the third nation to institute a National Human Rights Commission which is popularly known as SUHAKAM.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's relationship with SUHAKAM is often judged by his outbursts or comments regarding issues raised by the Commission. For example, SUHAKAM's first inquiry report which concluded that the police had used excessive force during the November 5 2000 Kesy Highway gathering and against those arrested were criticised by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad as being "western-influence" and not in the interest of the nation. Similarly, SUHAKAM's report "Freedom of Assembly", which called for a more conducive environment for peaceful assemblies, was rudely brushed off by the Prime Minister who was quoted by the media as saying: "They are free to give suggestions but it doesn't mean we have to follow them."

In spite of his few critical comments on SUHAKAM's efforts, it is to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's credit that he had never at any time interfered in the Commission's work. In fact he had urged SUHAKAM to work closely with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Human Resources to create a caring culture. Also, he had admitted that smart partnerships between the Government and the private sector, NGOs, the media and SUHAKAM are much needed for the Government's endeavour to protect the environment to succeed (9/9/02).

Furthermore, since its establishment in the April 2000, SUHAKAM, has come to be seen by some analysts as a credible monitor of human rights situation in the country and a check on police activities that previously lacked oversight. Also, some observers acknowledged SUHAKAM as one of the few institutions in society with any ability to challenge, however distantly, executive control. For its efforts and articulation on human rights, SUHAKAM is still wrongly perceived by many, including senior civil servants as a non-governmental organisation.

Under Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's Government a number of non-governmental (NGOs), including the Bar Council and public interest organisations, have devoted considerable attention to human rights. These human rights NGOs have been very vocal and their number are increasing. In itself this reflects the tolerance of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's government's towards them, which encouraging the growth of more human rights movements.

These human rights bodies are not only monitoring and promoting the human rights situation but also conduct yearly reviews of SUHAKAM's performance. So far, their evaluation the SUHAKAM has been more on the positive side than negative. "A Memorandum from Civil Society to SUHAKAM and the Government of Malaysia" concluded that over the period between 2000 and 2001, there has been much improvement in SUHAKAM's organisational structure, in that the Commission had more access to funds, increased staff

strength and eventually, obtained office premises of its own. There were more activities, press statements and commendable positions taken on some of the crucial issues concerning human rights for all in the country and these actions of SUHAKAM will certainly serve to build faith and confidence in the Commission among Malaysians and other residents of the country."

The Memorandum also made specific recommendations to the Government which include:

1. Take Heed of Global Trends: to ratify international treaties and conventions, especially pertaining to human rights and racial discrimination, with many of them putting these practices through their international laws. Malaysia, which was recently described by the Prime Minister as the most developed of the developing countries, should be comparing its performance with the developed world, not with some repressive regimes in the developing world and the situation in under-developed countries.
2. Review Outdated Laws: to play a more effective role in the international communities, especially with the provisions of the World Trade Organisation taking effects and as a member of the UNCHR, by reviewing all the nation's laws to ensure that they are in harmony with international laws.
3. Implement the recommendations of SUHAKAM. If, for any reason, it is unable to, in accordance with the principles of governmental accountability and transparency it must give its reasons publicly, and within a reasonable time, as to why the recommendations cannot be implemented.
4. Amend the Human Rights Commission Act 1999 to make it more credible and effective.

SUHAKAM in the concluding chapter of its Annual Report 2002 noted that it seems timely for SUHAKAM to place greater focus on economic, social and cultural rights in 2003 which could serve as a catalyst for the Government to consider ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This surely would be in line with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's inclination towards human rights and could prove his emphasis as being right.

Surely, from a public relations perspective, the formation of SUHAKAM, of which credit must also go to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, has boosted the government's credibility in terms of human rights. It certainly has kept Malaysia abreast with international human rights commitments and is "mainstreaming" human rights

in the national agenda. Even Lim Kit Siang, the chairman of the Democratic Action Party (DAP) which was initially sceptical of SUHAKAM and its formation is becoming a regular visitor to it.

Certainly, SUHAKAM will be seen as the best legacy for Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in terms of human rights development and protection in Malaysia. In terms of public relations, it will put the Malaysian Government in a good light, nationally and internationally. That is, as long as SUHAKAM is allowed to conduct its duties independently, in accordance to its Act, the UDHR and the Paris Principles. The personalities appointed by the government to be human rights commissioners must be credible and dedicated as well as brave to conduct their duties without favour or fear. The NGOs championing human rights should also be allowed to flourish.

I would like to end this paper on Human Rights and Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad by quoting his speech on "A New Globalisation In A New World Order" (2001) in which he said: "The new globalisation that we must foster must rightly reward enterprise and excellence; but it must contribute to and not detract from this more just, more caring, kinder, gentler, more compassionate New World Order. The new globalisation that we must foster must contribute and not detract from greater ethics and morality, greater liberty and independence, greater equality and mutual respect, greater productive democracy and comprehensive human rights."

About The Writer

Dato' Mohd Hamdan bin Haji Adnan is a teacher, researcher, author and practitioner of public relations in Malaysia for more than two decades. He has written more than a dozen books and over 500 articles in the field of public relations, communication, consumerism and human rights. Hamdan has served as the Honorary Secretary as well as President of the Institute of Public Relations Malaysia and a Council member for over 20 years. Currently, he is a Professor of Communication and Public Relations at the Institute Technology Mara (UiTM) which he has served over a quarter of a century. Now, he is a second term Commissioner with SUHAKAM, the National Human Rights Commission of Malaysia. He chairs its working committee on Complaints, and Investigations.

He chairs the Working Sub-Group for Visitation to Detention Centres and is a Member of the Working Group for Education, the Public Relations Committee, The Indigenous People, Sub-Working Committee. Also, he was appointed to be the Spokesperson for SUHAKAM by fellow commissioners. Hamdan is also a council member of the high powered National Economic Action Council (NEAC), the National Information Technology Council, Malaysia Design Council, Foundation for the Muslim Economic Development, etc. However, Hamdan is most known as the President of the Consumer Movement, namely FOMCA.





Meeting the Challenges

by Valentine Siva (FIPR)

Meeting the Challenges

A discourse on Government Public Relations will not be complete if a historical development and perspective is not discussed to show the evolutionary nature of government public relations. In this presentation, a chronological approach is used to take the reader through the times, era and period where the evolution took place and is still taking place. It is a process that sees a metamorphosis in tools and methods.

In 1939, during the reign of the colonial masters, namely the British, a Department of Information (Jabatan Penerangan) was established. The Director of this Department was an Englishman by the name of G L Preet, a journalist from the New Straits Times. The Department was established ostensibly to promote the rule of the British and to ensure their continued exploitation of the locals and local natural resources. A year later in 1940, the above Department was renamed the Department of Information and Publicity headed by Dr. Victor Purcell as Director General.

However, in September 1945, this Department was again renamed the Department of Publicity and Printing. It would be observed that from 1939 until 1 April 1946, information dissemination and communication with the masses was a major task of the Department of Information although changes were made in the organization's set up.

Only on 1 April 1946, after the Second World War was the Department of Public Relations established. This too seemed a transition from Information to Public Relations. It would be pertinent to state here that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 saw the end of the Japanese Occupation and the return of the British Military Administration in the then Malaya.

This was also the period when the Malayan Peoples Anti Japanese Army (MPAJA) wanted to take over the country from the British. The MPAJA subsequently transformed itself into the Communist Party of Malaya (KPM). It would be reasonable to assume that the conversion of MPAJA into the KPM was one of the reasons for the returned British Military Administration to change the name of the Publicity and Printing Department into a Public Relations entity to 'win the hearts and minds' of the people. The battle for the 'heart and minds of the people' needed a public relations approach to counter the MPAJA threat – from Public Information to a Two-way Asymmetric dimension.

Four years later in 1950 the department was renamed the Department of Information and continued with its role of 'building bridges with the people' and to overcome subversive activities conducted by elements that caused anarchy in the country and particularly in the predominantly rural Chinese area. The, persuasive communication techniques were fully utilized to win over the masses.

In October 1959, two years after Independence, the Department of Information and Radio Malaya were integrated to enhance the Public Relations outreach programme of the new independent nation, besides initiating development communication programmes.

From 1948-1960 (The Emergency Period), the Department of Information launched a campaign to 'win the hearts and minds' of the population and to fight against the communist insurgency and their growing influence among some sectors of the public.

From the very beginning, the Department was given the task of waging psychological warfare against the communist terrorists and their supporters. The Department's mobile units, a familiar and welcome sight during the period played a major role in combating communist terrorists. Their contribution is immeasurable in terms of sacrifices made by the Department during the insurgency and Emergency Period.

Between 1955-1956 the Information Department was directly involved in explaining to the public the type of constitution that would be presented after Independence. Public feedback was vital in ensuring that the Constitution to be adopted was acceptable to the multiracial public in Malaysia.

One of the major developments that took place in 1961 was the establishment of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. In 1963, Malaysia was formed. A momentous period in our history which also resulted in Confrontation was when Indonesia under the leadership of President Sukarno launched the 'Ganyang Malaysia' offensive. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting had to launch a series information and Public Relations campaigns to counter the threat.



The Information Minister Tan Sri Mohd Khalil Yaakob and Deputy Information Minister Datuk Zainuddin Maidin signing at the launch of A Million Signatures promoting peace registering protest against USA led war on Iraq - 10 February

Angkasapuri





Road Transport Department Deputy Director Wahid Selamat placing a reflector on the back of a tanker in conjunction of road safety campaign at Plaza Tol Gombak - 22 November 2003

The separation of Singapore from the Federation of Malaysia in 1965 saw the Ministry in action explaining the separation and pacifying the rakyat over the issue. It would be impossible here in this short discourse to explain in detail the various events that took place and the trying times the Government had in explaining and informing the public, the issues at hand at that point in time.

In all these efforts, exhibitions, road shows, billboards, posters, pamphlets, leaflets and other collateral besides radio were used to reach out to the public in all parts of the country.

One of the ever ongoing activities of the Ministry of Information is to ensure that racial harmony, tolerance and understanding is maintained and sustained. The May 13 incident emphasized the fragile nature of our race relationships. This was very aptly handled by the Department of Information and the mass media.

Another area of concern is to look at national integration particularly after Sabah and Sarawak joined the Federation. The integration of the various racial and ethnic groups with all their cultural and religious diversities had to be addressed. Towards this end, the Ministry organizes a variety of civic courses, programmes and activities to instill patriotism, mutual understanding and tolerance amongst the various races. Civic and other courses are conducted even in villages and plantations to promote and inculcate understanding.

The government through the various Ministries and the Department of Information, including the electronic media has conducted campaigns to promote the national language, patriotism, boost food production, conduct the Anti Drug Abuse Campaign, Anti Hoarding Campaign, Campaign against Dengue Fever, Aids, Road Safety, Rukun Tetangga, National Savings Bank Scheme, election campaigns, explain the various 5 year Development Plans encourage investment in the National Unit Trust, explain the Look East Policy, Malaysia Incorporated and the Privatisation Policy. The Government's concept of Clean, Trustworthy and Efficient; and Malaysia Boleh. While the mass media plays a useful complementary role in giving publicity, providing information and creating awareness that leads to change, the acceptance of new and innovative ideas and reforms require 'change agents' employing an interpersonal approach in communication.

This interpersonal communication is almost entirely carried out by the Information Department through dialogues, civic sessions, talks, group discussions and house to house visits.



Ong Yee Kiat with students of SMK Sri Senosa launching an Antismoking Campaign - 23 March 2003

These approaches have been found to be effective, not only in finding out what the people think and desire, but also in getting them to accept new ideas and methods and generally to participate in development projects that are being carried out for their benefit. Development Communication is emphasized as a strategy to change the attitude and behaviour of the people. The role of extension workers cannot be sidelined here.

The use of such persuasive communications strategy, requires the joint effort of all those involved in the planning of the various information media as well as of those who are in direct contact with the people – the field officers, the print and electronic media and public relations personnel. The setting up of the Public Complaints Bureau is yet another milestone in people communication that serves to address public complaints and problems thereby bringing the public and the government closer.

Whilst maintaining vigilance against communism, the government also monitors the activities of political parties and extremist groups including religious ones to ensure that the security, harmony and peace of the citizens and the nation is safeguarded and preserved at all costs.

In February 1991, the Prime Minister introduced Vision 2020 – The Way Forward which would metamorphose Malaysia into a fully developed nation by the year 2020. Malaysia would have to overcome nine challenges to achieve this vision, considered by many as the only country in the world with a comprehensive clear vision to propel the nation into the ICT millennium.

This vision has to be explained and clarified to the civil servants, the corporate sector, students and the general public. Various government departments, Ministers and Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad himself, have taken great pains to explain this vision and to seek the public's support and cooperation. The Vision should be a shared vision to be internalized and implemented by all sectors and individuals.

In the decade of the nineteen-eighties, more programme oriented reforms were introduced and directed towards improvements in the following areas: the introduction of Manual of Work Procedure and Desk File to improve work systems and procedures.

- ☐ The introduction of Quality Control Circles (QCC) to enhance productivity in the public sector agencies
- ☐ The introduction of Malaysia Incorporated and the Privatisation Policy which resulted in a shift in the role of the public sector
- ☐ Efforts to inculcate and encourage positive work ethics, values and attitudes as evidenced by initiatives such as:-
 - the introduction of the punch card system to record work times
 - the use of name tags by public sector personnel
 - implementation of the Civil Service Code of Ethics
 - introduction of The Look East Policy to highlight positive work values and emphasis on group benefits versus individualism and to emulate the success of East Asian Countries like South Korea and Japan
 - introduction of Clean, Efficient and Trustworthy Campaign in the effort to prevent abuse and mismanagement and leadership by example as a practicing motto for all civil servants

In the reform process, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1989 launched the Excellent Work Culture Movement, which was generally seen to be the starting point of a concentrated and focussed reform programme. The thrust was to inculcate a culture of excellence in the public sector agencies based on the core values of quality, productivity, innovation, integrity, discipline, accountability and professionalism. The idea was to make the public service that of a pacesetter and facilitator to the private sector as well as service provider to the people at large.

In 1986, the Panel on Administration Improvements to the Civil Service (PANEL) was set up to act as the prime mover and coordinator for the implementation of administrative improvement programmes in the Civil Service.

There were Eight Principal Strategies employed to advance the reform as follows:

- ☐ *Providing customer oriented services*
- ☐ *Improving systems and work procedures*
- ☐ *Upgrading the use of Information Technology (IT)*
- ☐ *Strengthening public sector cooperation*
- ☐ *Streamlining organizational structures*
- ☐ *Improving organizational structures and human resource development*
- ☐ *Inculcating values of excellence*

These changes that came within a short time, represent a fundamental paradigm shift in the administration of the Government, the primary thrust being to provide efficient, fast and satisfactory services to the consumer public. Programmes such as Total Quality Management, The Desk File, Manual of Work Procedure, Guidelines on Counter Services, Guidelines on the Management of Meetings and the Work Action Form is to help Government Servants to discharge their duties in a responsible and responsive manner.

Besides the 21 Development Administration Circulars issued which conveyed guidelines to manage the change process, other guidelines on expected administrative behaviour, work and personal ethics have been clearly delineated in the Public Officers (Conduct and Discipline) Regulations 1993. Various publications have also been issued towards this end.

Under the Total Quality Management Programme, all public sector agencies are required to formulate their respective missions through the process of strategic quality planning. They are to be market driven, and to institutionalize a distinct customer - orientation in the delivery services. In this connection a significant initiative has been the introduction of the Clients Charter which was launched in 1993. Another initiative is the implementation of the New System for Performance Appraisal for more performance and result orientated outputs.

The Government not only responds to public complaints but it also encourages public dissatisfaction to be made known so that, conscious efforts can be made to improve the Civil Service. Information and Exhibition Clinics of the Public Complaints Bureau have been launched throughout the country. Thus, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the Government is not only accountable to existing institutions of control but also to the public at large.

What about accountability? Several institutions act as a mechanism to control discipline, accountability and integrity among public officials. Among these institutions are the Public Accounts Committee (PAC directly under Parliament), the Committee on Government Business, the Anti Corruption Agency and the office of the Auditor General.

In addition, every government department including Statutory Authorities and Local Authorities set up Clients Day to meet with the public and hear their complaints. Some have even set up hotlines and immediate response teams, like the 'pothole buster team' at Kuala Lumpur City Hall and the Flying Squad to respond immediately to public complaints. Such mechanisms have helped not only to bring the public closer to the civil service but also to win the confidence of the public and tax payers.

Other institutions like the Malaysian Business Council, National Labour Advisory Council, Annual Budget Dialogue, MITI's Dialogue on Trade and Industry and the Consumer Affairs Council to name a few, have been set up to promote business and to ensure labour stability. The Government recognizes the private sector as the engine of economic growth and helps the business and commercial community to prosper.

On the international scene the Government is a member of the United Nations and all the chapters that come within this international organization.

Malaysia has contributed peace keeping forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Congo, Ethiopia, Timor Leste and others and has also lent support to the mercy mission in Afghanistan and Iraq after the military intervention by the United States in these countries. Malaysia has also played a vital role and still is, in bringing about peace and freedom in Myanmar and is striving hard to restore democracy. Our role in ASEAN, in the Non- Aligned Movement and the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) in bringing about global understanding, peace and prosperity in the world is world renown.

Today, Malaysia is seen as the voice of the Third World Countries, a spokesman for the down trodden. Our concept of 'prosper thy neighbour and not pauper thy neighbour' is a guiding beacon of our foreign diplomacy. Currently, new forms of mutually beneficial structures such as smart partnership dialogues have been put into place leading to a win-win philosophy. The success of the smart partnership concept domestically, has led to applications in the international arena such as the Langkawi International Dialogue and similar dialogues in Africa and the Middle East. More emphasis is now paid to South-South dialogue while maintaining North South Cooperation.

Multinational and bilateral public relations programmes and activities need to be stepped up in a fast growing and expanding globalised world. Alerting the citizens locally and the third world countries, towards the threats and dangers that lie in a globalised village has also been our government's role. While globalization may have its merits, the unprepared will be 'gobbleised' by the developed countries. This is the message of the Malaysian Prime Minister. It is therefore vital for Third World Countries to network and exchange information on a regular basis to create better and mutual understanding for the common good. Whilst, the role of the government is in the interest of the people, it is also imperative that the burden be shared with the citizens. Their participation in the decision making process is deemed inalienable.

More than anything else, over the last 22 years under the able leadership of the longest serving Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the Government has been more responsive to the demands and needs of a more demanding, discerning and enlightened citizenry.

From a feudalistic colonial service, the government today has transformed itself into a people friendly modern administration. Avenues for citizen's participation have been created for dialogue and discussion where they can seek greater involvement in the process of governance. The quest for new mechanisms to resolve this interface have to found by both parties who demand 'quick fixes' for their problems.

The government has thus far managed to overcome the racial issues of May 13, 1969 through affirmative action that nearly tore the country apart. The Department of Information played a vital role in bringing the people together through its various campaigns.

The 1997 currency issues and overcoming the economic crisis with very unconventional methods and approaches like pegging the ringgit at RM3.80 and other curative and preventive measures by the Prime Minister saved the day. The population finally realized the importance of these measures which caused anxiety. Even the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund applauded and praised the Prime Minister's approach in resolving these issues which they once denied.

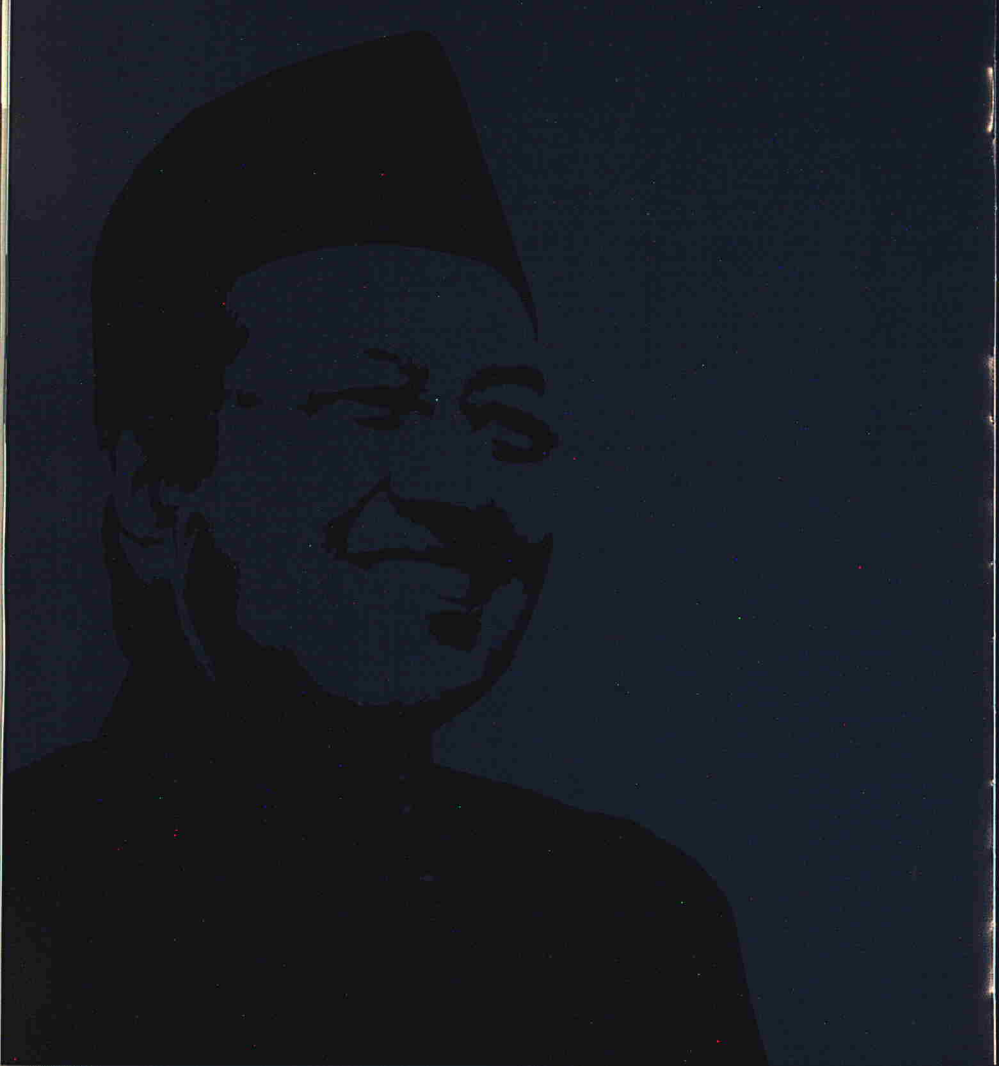
Government Public Relations is conducted daily both locally and in the international arena. It is a continuing process that never ends. It is ever ready to counter external threats and neutralize the problem. Our foreign missions and other government and quasi government agencies are 'on the ball' so to speak. However, in the final analysis and as the final arbiter the Government should not, cannot and will not abandon or abdicate its role in the protection of public interest. The court of Public Opinion will be ever vigilant to ensure good governance.



About The Writer

The writer of the article is a Fellow of the Institute of Public Relations (FIPR) and immediate past Vice President of the Institute. He was a former Director of the Population and Family Development Board, Director/Senior Analyst with the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS Malaysia). He also conducts PR Training Programmes.

He is currently the Public Relations/Media Consultant to Kuala Lumpur City Hall.



Investor Relations

by Doris Lim

Investor Relations

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad – the Contrarian

Leadership is all about braving new frontiers

7 out of 10 new cars on the Malaysian roads is a Malaysian-made one'. But this would not be the case, if Malaysia did not venture into producing its own national car, amidst grave skepticism from various parties. The brainchild and pride of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the Proton, from Malaysia's very 1st national auto maker, was often hailed as a shining example of "Malaysia boleh". (Malaysia can do as the national slogan). It has always been a part of his grand vision to transform a then agricultural economy into a manufacturing base, making it more a national agenda rather than his very own pet project.

Auto Market Share – YTD August 2002 & 2003

	Per cent	
	2002	2003
Proton	51	41
Perodua	26	28
Non-national PV*	7	12
Commercial vehicles	10	11
4WD	7	9

*Passenger vehicles

Source: Kenanga Research



But this is just the tip of many more revolutionary concepts and ideas to come. Overly nationalistic perhaps, breaking the mould of his predecessors, he also invited controversy throughout his leadership.

The 88-storey Petronas Twin Towers, currently one of the world's tallest building, was also a national pride and a visible landmark of sophisticated Kuala Lumpur.

Together with the RM270m (\$75m) Sepang F1 circuit, and the ultra modern, vast KLIA International Airport, these icons were further symbols of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's high-tech vision of modern Malaysia, conceived to put Malaysia on the world stage.

But these were not all. 30 km out of Kuala Lumpur is the new federal administrative capital of Putrajaya, with stunning architectural structures and numerous bridges spanning its lake-filled precincts. The incredible Cyberjaya media and IT complex, in close proximity to Putrajaya, houses university and higher education facilities, recreational parks and waterways plus futuristic accommodation of what will be a public work force of 330,000 and a private sector population of 80,000. All of them – radiate taste, style, efficiency and prosperity, and even more controversy.

Economists and critics decried Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's push for prestige through rapid development and a host of grandiose and mega projects. Cited as cases of inefficient allocation of capital, imprudent spending on such mega projects with questionable economic value puts the Malaysia's financial sector in jeopardy.

Tun Mahathir's maverick style of government during his 22 years at the helm has earned him accolades, and brickbats too. "It comes with the job", he philosophizes.



THE PARADIGM SHIFT

Without doubt, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is the most successful economic manager Malaysia has ever known. Against all odds and accepted conventions, he forced the Malaysian economy to leap frog.

Under his stewardship, there was a paradigm shift from an agriculture – commodity based economy to industrialization. Crucial to the leap forward, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's Privatisation Masterplan caused that major change: from a passive developer of infrastructure into more diverse roles, in a bid to encourage increased economic activities.

The Ministry of Finance and its investment arm Khazanah, Bank Negara Malaysia and Petronas became federal level investors-custodians in the privatization phase in the 1980's through their ownership of shares in privatised companies as Telekom, Tenaga, MAS, MISC, Petronas Gas, and many others. Soon, utilities, IPPs, broadcasting stations, more roads and highways, public transport, telecommunications, and ports came under this wave of privatisation, thus giving members of the public more choices, improved quality, better services, and a higher standard of living and quality of life. Privatisation has saved the government from having to invest billions in these projects (which are better handled by the private sector), while channeling the savings into rural development, alleviating poverty and improving information technology under its socio-economic agenda.

There was a period in the nationalisation phase when listed vehicles such as MAS, Maybank, Telekom and Tenaga were subjected to market scrutiny. Control of Sime Darby, Guthrie and Golden Hope from the London Stock Exchange exacted a

hefty price but this was in line with the concept of economic nationalism promoted by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad as CEO of Malaysia Inc.

In a move to develop new economic activity, the government created new private equity and venture capital investment vehicles such as Malaysian Technology Development Corp, Multimedia Development Corp, MSC Venture Capital and Malaysia Capital Management (Mavcap).

It is interesting to note that government's investment agencies dominate the over RM450 billion market capitalization of the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange. During and after the Asian crisis, came the emergence of government entities as Danamodal, Danasaham, Danaharta, Mavcap and Khazanah Nasional, which have been instrumental in hastening Malaysia's economic recovery from the Asian crisis.

1997 and 1998 proved turbulent years for Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. The Asian financial crisis which began in Thailand in mid-1997, spread to Malaysia by end 1997. The ringgit collapsed as did the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange. The crisis deepened significantly with Japan entering into recession. Malaysia's real GDP contracted by 6.7 per cent in 1998, having grown by 7.5 per cent in 1997. Contrast this to the period between 1991 and 1996 when GDP growth averaged over 8 per cent.

He refused to turn towards IMF for support during the Asian crisis, dismissing their prescriptive medicine of increasing interest rates in a credit crunch as baseless. By Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's reckoning, the banking system would only choke the economic lifeline of the businesses it is meant to help. Instead, he preached that local banks go easy on these businesses.



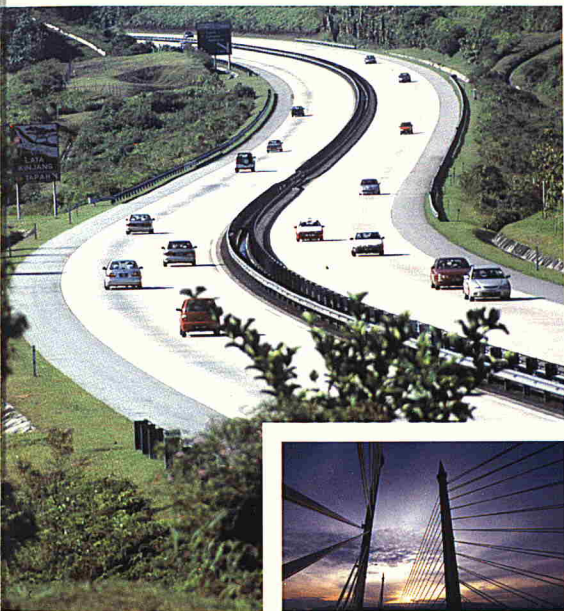
Menara KL

PENCAR NAGAS (M) Sdn Bhd

Malaysia's very own satellite TV

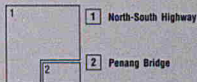


KL Monorail in the heart of Kuala Lumpur



Like the contrarian he was, the crisis prompted an unorthodox policy response. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad imposed capital controls banning ringgit instruments among offshore banks, and retained for one year, the proceeds from the sale of shares. The government also began to repatriate all ringgit circulating abroad and fixed the exchange rate at RM3.80 to the US dollar. It halted currency depreciation in the face of currency speculation.

With signs of increased stability in international markets, capital controls were relaxed in February 1999 and foreign equity investors were allowed to repatriate capital and profits on payment of graduated "exit taxes". Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's rescue plan worked. It steered Malaysia out of her economic malaise and her recovery was remarkable. Thus was born the term "Mahathirnomics" for his successful formulae.



Trade Mission – China

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad received framed message in Chinese to mean "Seeking Means of Cooperation and Sharing Mutual Prosperity" from Shanghai Economic Director, Puan Xiao Chang – 24 Jan 1995



Trade Mission – China

Foreign affairs, relation with China – 15 February 1994



Trade Mission – China,

Malaysian delegates in talk with Chinese Premier A Li Peng at PM's Department – 13 December 1990

THE NEW ECONOMIC ORDER

According to the findings of a global survey by A.T. Kearney's 2003 FDI confidence index, Malaysia improved to the 23rd position this year, versus 42nd a year ago. Of the 453 MIDA applications received from January to June 2003, valued at RM9,694.4 million, the domestic component was a 59% figure registered at RM5,752.5. Foreign investment stood at RM3,941.9 million for that same period.

With FDI's favouring China, the switch is now towards boosting the domestic sectors: agriculture, tourism and SMEs to provide the catalyst for growth. "We have to reinvent the economy", declared

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. "For decades, our economic growth has been overly reliant on FDI's and international trade. Growth must now be domestic-driven and generated by our own resources."

The new stimulus package aimed at stimulating both domestic investment and consumption, comes complete with prime priming projects and measures to enhance corporate governance and transparency, in which Malaysia is clearly ahead of its neighbours.

Overview: Applications Received 2003* and 2002

	2002	2003*
Number	878	453
Potential Employment	68,575	34,872
Total Capital Investment (RM Mill)	18,783.5	9,694.4
Domestic	7,047.9	5,752.5
Foreign	11,735.6	3,941.9

*Figures for the year 2003 are for January-June only

Source: MIDA's statistics

South Korea, after the Asian crisis, became the business model. Stimulating domestic demand, a vibrant small and medium-sized industries and a highly skilled workforce (akin to Malaysia), all combined to pull an economy from despair to a platform of prosperity within four years.

In pursuit of Vision 2020, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was determined to develop the Malaysian Silicon valley. Dubbed the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) this 15 km-50 km site is the hub for pioneering high-tech research and development, with Mesdaq, (modelled on the US automated market, Nasdaq) providing the capital market support. And Malaysia is banking on its K-economy Masterplan and emphasis on English in the class rooms to produce a well-educated work force.

IT literacy is being improved in line with the government's efforts to transform into a knowledge-based k-economy, and the MSC is poised to be the next engine of growth.

Malaysia Inc, the symbiosis of public and private sector goals, has also instituted a professional code and discipline in the face of increased calls for corporate governance and transparency. The restructuring of Malaysia Inc came in many forms, with the Corporate Debt Recovery Committee (CDRC) taking centre stage for the economic reforms. Malaysia's highly indebted companies were subjected to debt workouts with an agreed time frame to implement them. None seems to be getting special protection, nor spared the axe. The days of corporate excesses are over.

HIS LEGACY

When Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad took over in 1981, the country had a population of 14.1 million, a GDP worth RM29 billion and a per capita income of RM4,088. Exports accounted for 57.7 per cent of GDP.

22 years later, the population stands at 23.8 million (his 70 million population policy is still far off), a GDP of RM214 billion, and despite the recession of the mid-eighties,

The 1997 Asian economic crisis and 11 September, the per capita income rose to RM13,333. Exports as a percentage of GDP is a spectacular 181 per cent.

Malaysia prospered well under a regime of investor-friendly policies within a stable political and economic framework. Michael Blackman in his book "Big in Asia" praised Malaysia's success story.

Despite this, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad judges himself harshly for not being able to change the mindset of Malaysians, nor preparing Malaysians fully for the globalization and competitive pressures. His rantings reflect that he has not done enough as a catalyst of change.

There is a lot to be said about attitudes and values of Malaysians – and these are relevant in current times. Malaysians are now more educated, economically stronger and more confident. As for the few corporate Malays who seem the object of derision and contempt, by and large many corporate Malay leaders and ordinary businessmen are holding their own ground. They continue to inspire a whole new generation of young Malay entrepreneurs, business executives and professionals.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's true legacy may not be entirely assessed through the scrutiny of economic progress. Undoubtedly he has given Malaysia a voice on the global map. Within the Muslim world, he has demonstrated how successfully pragmatic policies, and moderate, modern and progressive leadership can achieve economic development equal to developed nations, within the tenets of Islam.

Malaysia's economic model is winning converts, especially among emerging markets. The economy is fundamentally sound, and with market reforms on stream and a rekindling of investor interest, in many ways, Malaysia is well prepared for the future.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad can now rest easy.

About The Writer

With over 20 years in the field of corporate and marketing communications, Doris has been involved in many multi-faceted public relations assignments ranging from corporate-financial restructuring exercises to credentials presentations, copy writing and scripting for brochures, publication and corporate video documentaries. Also, producing radio and television programmes.

When time permits, she also lectures on corporate and financial PR, and investor relations at both educational institutions and IPRM-endorsed public seminars.

Doris gained her Bachelor of Economics and Business Administration degree from University of Malaya in 1977. She has worked with Bancrom Development Bank of the Philippines, Opilvy and Mather Direct Response and Authur Andersen and Publicis Bomo PR. She established Matrix Communications in 1994.

As President of the Soroptimist International Club of Bangsar, a community service club for professional women, she maintains an active interest in community affairs especially in championing causes for the underprivileged, especially the disabled.





Muslim Image, Islamic Substance

by Prof Datuk Dr Syed Arabi Idid

Muslim Image, Islamic Substance

INTRODUCTION

Public Relations has much to learn from the thoughts of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Islam and his assessments on the plight of the Muslims. He is forthright in his concerns that Muslims should face the challenges of modernity and be concerned to build up their resources to be equal in strength to the other communities, not to confront others but to contribute. It is possible that the ideas that he expounded on Islam, especially on image creation and perceptions, can be explicated and extrapolated to the many concepts in public relations.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad with his successor Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi after the handing over ceremony at the Prime Minister's Department – 31 October 2003



Scrutinizing the building plan for the Putrajaya Convention Centre



CHALLENGES TO ISLAM

In articulating his ideas on Islam, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad would often cite examples from other Muslim countries, but he would be specific to Malaysia as an Islamic country in calling Muslim Malaysians to be proactive in facing the changes taking place in the world. Malaysia always encourages other Islamic countries that they must change to meet the challenges coming from within and without. The efforts made by Malaysia, as a multiracial, multi-religious country to rise to the challenges of globalization are taken by many nations as a model of how a majority-dominated Muslim community can rise to the occasion. Yet many challenges face the leaders and the people of Malaysia.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad begins by providing an assessment on the plight of the Muslim Ummah before offering solutions, mentioning that collectively they live in two worlds: One world that houses the privileged few, living in a world of plenty and the other world struggling in a quagmire of poverty. Speaking at an occasion to receive the Lariba Lifetime Achievement Award in Chicago, United States in, 2000, he said, "The Islamic world today is full of paradoxes and contradictions. Despite being resource rich, we are economically poor and weak. While some of us live amidst plenty, the majority of the ummah live in abject poverty."



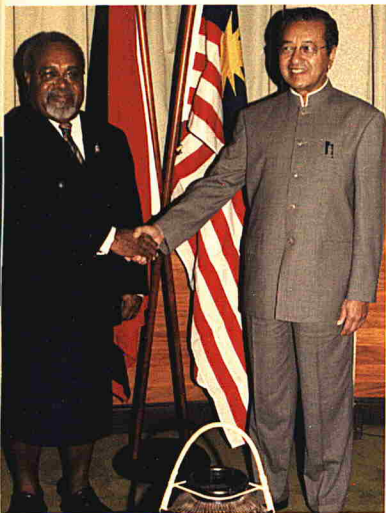
Delegates congratulate and express their gratitude to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, chairman of the 10th Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit after the closing ceremony at the Putrajaya Convention Centre - 17 October 2003



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad and Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah discussing bilateral issues during their meeting at Putrajaya Convention Centre (PCC) – 17 October 2003

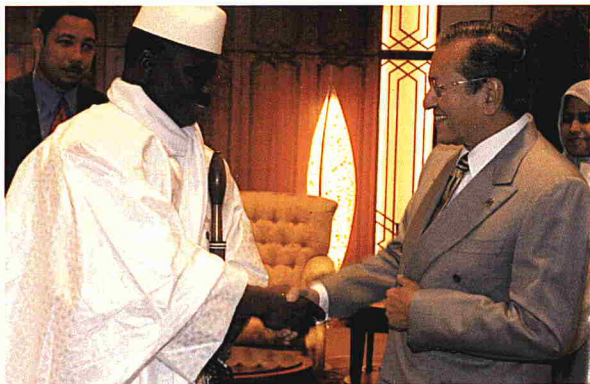


Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (L) greets Iranian President Mohammad Khatami upon arrival for the 10th Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) summit in Putrajaya near Kuala Lumpur October 16, 2003. Leaders of Muslim nations opened a summit in Malaysia on Thursday with more words than influence to expand on the Islamic world's two hottest subjects, Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts

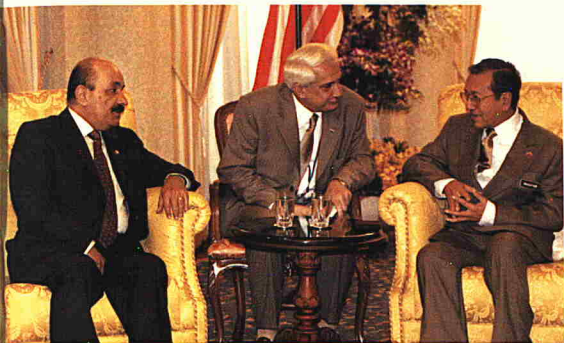


Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is received by his Papua New Guinea counterpart Sir Michael Somare at the latter's office at the Parliament House here, today. The one-to-one meeting included discussions on issues of mutual interest. Dr Mahathir, accompanied by wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali, arrived here Friday for a two-day visit that is set to open new avenues of cooperation between the two countries - 24 October

Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad (L) greets President of Iraqi Governing Council Ayad Allawi as he arrives for the 10th Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit in Putrajaya near Kuala Lumpur 16 October 2003. Leaders of Muslim nations opened a summit in Malaysia on Thursday with more words than influence to expand on the Islamic world's two hottest subjects, Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad greeting the President of Gambia, Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh when the latter called on him at the Putrajaya Convention Centre - 17 October



Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan (L) and Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad hold a bilateral meeting at the 116-nation Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Kuala Lumpur, 25 February 2003. Leaders at the two-day meeting sought to present a strong front in opposition to war in Iraq, while in New York, the United States and key allies Britain and Spain submitted a resolution to the UN Security Council declaring Saddam Hussein has missed "the final opportunity" to disarm and he must now face the consequences. The man in the center is an unidentified interpreter.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad being hug by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat before he departs back after a session at Palace of The Golden Horses Hotel - 17 October

The Muslim countries are noted for their illiteracy, infant mortality, backwardness; negativities that societies wish not to be associated with. Over the years, governments of Muslim countries have not been able to lead their countries toward prosperity.

The plight of the ummah is found beyond the economic contradictions as they are weak in nearly all aspects. They have poor facilities for education and training; the Muslim ummah are runned down for their apparent lack of transparency. Some Muslim countries are not careful in managing their economy and have allowed corruption to rule the land.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is a Muslim leader that wants Islam to contribute to world peace and understanding. Muslim countries can hardly do this because of their weakness. "Overall, the Muslim countries are weak, having no influence over world affairs," Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said, in Qatar, in 2000.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad envisaged a world where Islam can play its rightful role and Muslims are able to contribute significantly in all fields of human endeavour. He sees a world where Islam would contribute to the qualitative aspects of human society because, after all, Islam, being universal in appeal, would have the ingredients for the betterment of all mankind "The civilization that we build must not be for the purpose of confronting other societies or civilizations. It should contribute towards the sum total of human progress. It should show the compatibility and balance between the spiritual and the material, between progress and moral values, between religion and worldly concerns," he said when opening the World Islamic Civilization Festival in Kuala Lumpur in 1994.



ISLAMIC SUBSTANCE

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is termed as a pragmatic leader, as a person who diagnoses illness before providing prescriptions. His background as a medical doctor has helped him in politics. This professional background has also enabled him to diagnose the ills in Muslim society and to offer some solutions.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad believes that these backwardness can be cured through many ways, such as maintaining and acquiring knowledge through research and development, and in various fields, such as in economics, science, medicine and information and communication technology. He acknowledges that globalization has called on Muslims and communities in developing countries to provide a positive response. He paints a gloomy picture on globalization, its oppressive potential and cautions that it is a medium through which colonialisation can happen again.

He offers a terse solution, despite the grim picture. "The first thing that we have to do is to understand how globalisation, as presently interpreted, will work," he said to Muslim intellectuals and businessmen in Qatar, in 2000. Muslim nations cannot remain spectators if they wish to remain above others in a global society. "Allah s.w.t. does not help those who do not help themselves," he added.

But is it his views on knowledge that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has taken the plight of Islam to another level. He said that Islam is a religion based upon knowledge, for it is ultimately knowledge of the Oneness of God, combined with faith and total commitment to Him, that saves man. The text of the Quran is replete with verses inviting man to use his intellect, to ponder, to think and to know the goals of human life and to discover the Truth, which is none other than worshipping God in His Oneness.

During most of its history, Islamic civilization is witness to a veritable celebration of knowledge. That is why every traditional Islamic city possessed public and private libraries. Yet knowledge has not been updated by Muslim scholars to be able to solve present societal problems. He laments that today "there is no Muslim nation which is at the leading edge of knowledge, of technology, of organizational and administrative skills." (1993). He calls on Muslims to pursue all knowledge in order to protect their faith.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad always mentions that Islam does not reject the modern knowledge as well as religious or revealed knowledge because Islam itself encourages the seeking of knowledge. He has made the point that there can be no separation between secular and religious knowledge because all knowledge, all life, is encompassed by Islam (1993). Alluding to Malaysia, he said that the secret of Malaysia's success is that it emphasizes on all the aspects of this worldly life and that of the Hereafter.

Muslim disunity has become another concern for Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. He always takes the point that much can be achieved through unity. Unity is after all strength. Islam was revealed to the Prophet, peace be upon him, as the one and only religion. However, differences between mazhabs has resulted the division of the ummah. Different views of ulamas are caused by different interpretations. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad believe that unity among Muslims would prevail if all Muslims were to abide by the teachings of the Quran. "Quite often, the Quran is interpreted by people with vested interests. These people, in their furtherance of their own objectives, very often misinterpret the Quran. Throughout the history of Islam, there are have been many such people." He said when opening the 4th International Seminar on the Al-Quran (1994).

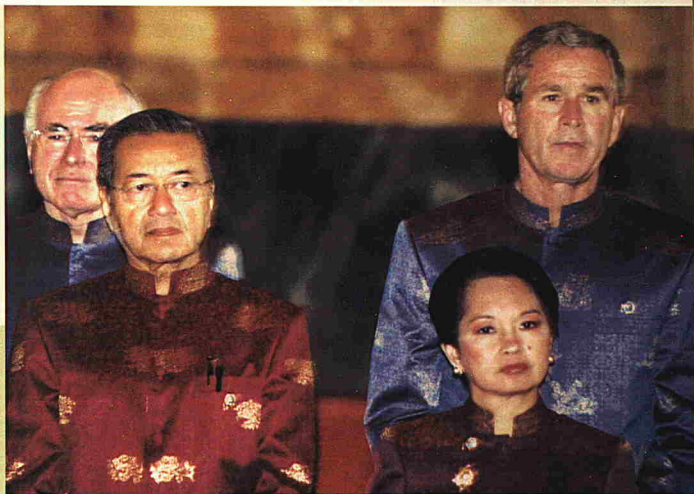
MUSLIM IMAGE

One of the central concerns of public relations is image. Public relations practitioners want their client organizations to have a good image and reputation to enable them to conduct their business. The image of Islam has not been that positive as the religion has to battle stereotyping and negative association. "No other religion is more misunderstood than Islam; misunderstood not only by non-Muslims but by Muslims themselves," he said in the speech in Chicago, in 2000.

Perceptions count as nations interact with one another, or when one conducts business. When one party perceives the other party as honest, business deals are quickly concluded. Negative perceptions can be costly. Thus when Islam is negatively portrayed, when it is associated with terrorism, when it is perceived to anti-progress, then the Muslim ummah find itself in a difficult position. Managing perception is important when Islam tries to project its own image. But image and perceptions has eventually to be matched by reality. In this aspect Islam has itself to offer to the world; a religion of peace, a religion concerned for progress.

In a speech in the United States in 2000, he said, "It has become imperative for Muslim countries to project a correct image of Islam away from the trend to associate it with poverty, illiteracy and backwardness. In order for the Islamic countries to return to its golden era and advance, they have no choice but to examine themselves and identify the causes of backwardness."

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad (left) listens as the Bangkok Declaration is read by Thailand's Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra (not in picture) on the last day of the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) Summit 2003 at the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall. Also present is the President of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (right) American President George W. Bush (back, right) and Australian President John Howard - 21 October 2003



Delegates listening attentively to the opening address by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the 10th Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit at Plenary Hall of the Putrajaya Convention Centre



First Cabinet Meeting at Putrajaya – A moment in Prayer



Conclusion

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has made his thoughts known on issues facing Muslims over several decades. He has expressed them well. He has identified the problems but he has done better to offer solutions. Muslims have not made their presence felt in the modern world, because they have little to offer to the world of science and technology.

Although resource rich, Muslim nations continue to exist in abject poverty. Eventually it is up to the Muslims themselves to offer their own solutions, as "Allah s.w.t. does not help those who do not help themselves."



About The Writer

Dr. Syed Arabi Idid is a professor in the Department of Communication and Dean of the Research Centre, at the International Islamic University Malaysia. He was at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for over 20 years before joining IIUM. He has conducted several public opinion studies and is also involved in marketing research. He was attached with MORI (Market and Opinion Research International) London while on sabbatical leave in 1993.

He has a BA (University Malaysia), MA and Ph.D. (University of Wisconsin). He is a member of the World Public Opinion Research Association, International Communication Association and Asian Mass Communication and Information Centre.





International Relations

by Datuk Dr Paddy Bowie

International Relations

PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT

It is frequently overlooked that the second word of P.R. is "Relations". Relationship building is very much part of our professional responsibilities and, as we live in a globalised world, 'international relations' have assumed a new and major importance. Yet this aspect of our work does not seem to have kept pace with the growing sophistication we bring to bear on the many other dimensions to our work.

Yet we have in our midst an exponent of international relations second to none. Margaret Thatcher once said of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad that he was "a truly global statesman". This article is dedicated to this one aspect – only one among many – of the attributes of our present Prime Minister, as particularly relevant to our own profession.

All too often as practitioners we concentrate on developing the tools of our trade – mainly the skills and techniques of communication, which in the modern world are getting cleverer and cleverer all the time. We are faced with a bewildering array of media, both print and electronic, from which to choose and a similar profusion of devices and disciplines required to exploit these to maximum effect. The advent of IT and especially the Internet imposes a whole new technology for us to master. Since this is the Information Age, it is hardly surprising we have become so communications focused, if not obsessed. But if global communications have become a *sine non quo* global relations have not.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad with President of the 54th Session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, Julian Robert Hunte, after delivering his speech at the UN Headquarters – 26 September



We are at risk, like so many, of becoming fascinated by technology. We have become technocrats, which is a very fashionable thing to be. The danger is that we expend so much effort mastering our craft we forget communications are essentially talent based, the talent being largely a gift for writing and for speaking. All the gimmicks in the world don't allow you to dispense with this mandatory facility with words. Spin-doctors know this – they have refined it in just one area of skill, down to the sound bite. Malaysians are well aware of this. We have in our midst a master spin-doctor by which I do not refer to the other doctor appellation he owes to his medical profession. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has given us "Bersih, Cekap dan Amanah", "Look East", the "Work Ethic", "Malaysia Inc", "Malaysia Boleh" and best of all, "Vision 2020". The latter, in our multilingual society, does not rely on words but on the language free power of numerals. Our advertising brethren would presumably give anything to be able to hire him for his dexterity in this field.

Public Relations is also an ideas game – demanding creative originality – and a people game. It implies interaction with people – our interface with the outside world. This external role involves the planned, systematic and sustained relations with our chosen publics – as precision targeted as cruise missiles. The aim is to promote understanding, good will and trust. The writer's own definition of PR does not talk about image – it is more a matter of managing reputation.

Again in the 21st Century context this is no longer straightforward. New challenges like public scrutiny, investigative and worse, adversarial journalism, have spawned more sophisticated tools like perception management, issues management, and at the extreme, the special demands of crisis communications. We have good reason in Malaysia to know and experience the perception gap that has opened up in our relations with West. It used to be our relations work was confined to media relations. Now we have to contend with Government Relations, Investor Relations, Political PR. In Washington alone there are 70,000 lobbyists most of them recruited from the PR profession



Indonesian President Megawati Soekarnoputri and Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad chatting briefly with Iban girls who have stopped performing their traditional dance "Aja" at the Xochimilco International Airport tarmac. Both Megawati and Tun Dr Mahathir were on their way home respectively

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad bidding farewell to Tanzania President Benjamin William Mkapa and his wife Anna Mkapu at Carcosa Seri Negara

In Malaysia we are no longer confined to the local scene. We live in a borderless world. Business has gone global. Public Relations has gone global. International relations are suddenly more relevant than ever before. 911 changed the world. In today's culture of violence and fear there has been a deep erosion of trust amongst mankind. Malaysia is steadfast in its recommendation of constructive engagement – using the skills of diplomacy and negotiation as an alternative to combat. No one is a more ardent advocate of this aspect of international PR taken to the highest levels than Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Communications have in effect accomplished the death of distance. This is best seen currently with the war in Iraq, which has also taken international public relations to a new level. The Americans call it Psy Ops. The battle for morale is waged alongside the battle for territory. 24-hour real time coverage is delivered by a new breed of "embedded" journalists. Which is all another name for propaganda. But by a fine irony if there is any one who came near to celebrity status it was that wacky Minister of Information for Iraq who despite the fabrications in his message managed to endear himself by being a "character" – i.e. by personal appeal. PR needs interpersonal skills.

TUN DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD THE PUBLIC RELATIONS STATESMAN

We in Malaysia are still novices in the international game. With one outstanding exception. It all began for Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad when as Trade Minister he personally led investment missions abroad and became a supersalesman for Malaysia. He is still doing it. In today's terms it is more likely to be an M.S.C. mission. He has to be the most travelled Premier in the world. If there were frequent flyer points for politicians he has earned several trips to the moon and back.

Dr Mahathir's Mission

His mission is for Malaysia, to make this country more prosperous (through investment) and more respected, to take its place amongst the nations of the world and give it both political and moral legitimacy. He speaks with authority without blood on his hands. His philosophy is that if you are a small inconsequential country from the developing world you will be excluded from the club of the rich and powerful nations like the G8 who make decisions for the rest of the world – and as like as not overlook the claims of the Third World "have nots". Then what is left is for you is to become a voice in the global debate. His further contention is that that in order to be heard you have to shout – and the farther away you are, you have to shout louder. And if you have to be obstreperous to get attention then he will be obstreperous at the expense of his own personal popularity. This may explain that strident rhetoric with which he is characterized. Often his anger may appear strategic to put the world on notice, but he does feel genuinely passionate about the causes he adopts. It is also a rare politician who will sacrifice the cult of personality.

He is rare in another sense. There are not many Asian voices to be heard outside their own territory. The sliver of land that is the Malay Peninsula and its appendage Singapore – therefore representing two of the smallest countries in the region have produced its only two global statesmen – Lee Kuan Yew and Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. For the latter it was hard at first in a world dominated by power politics to be given house room – dismissed as a game little bantam cock yapping at the heels of the world's giants. But he persevered and is now respected – even if it is only to react to his words with opprobrium. He has certainly captured world attention – almost media obsession – which is an inverse tribute to his impact on the world scene. Of late especially however he is being listened to. He first earned the right to speak by his undeniable achievements at home. His record validates him. His showcase was not just our economic development. He raised the country's profile as a multiracial, multi religious, multicultural society that had achieved a unique national synthesis, and is a microcosm of the future global order, living in peace and harmony.



The Prime Minister received the Honours Awards from Prince Sultan the Saudi Arabian Second Deputy Premier at the al-Ichazama Centre in Riyadh – 24 March 1997.



Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad meet Yasmine at Nikko Hotel – 3 September 2003

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad having a discussion with ex-Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe

A MORAL VOICE

He is now a moral force in the global debate for justice, peace and equality among nations. He has become a strategic ally in the war against terrorism to which he brings his own medical remedy – diagnose first, find the root causes, then prescribe. He believes in winning hearts and minds, which is how Malaysia became the only country to fight and defeat insurgent communism. He deplored the use of sanctions and other punitive tactics, which he chose to ignore as in Myanmar. He was one of the most vociferous opponents of the hideous regime of apartheid and banned travel to South Africa as long as it prevailed – finding common ground with Mandela a friendship that has outlived the conflict. Like all public relations professionals he brings to his relationships a message. He espouses the concept of "Prosper Thy Neighbour" to replace the more churlish "Begger thy Neighbour" and has made good his word. PR is about not making but keeping the promise. He is a builder, has been the prime mover in trying to bring peoples and countries together – developing relationships for mutual good. He was instrumental in enlarging ASEAN to its present 10 members, taking in the "renegades" like Myanmar. Now he is pursuing ASEAN plus three and with his usual, amazing persistence has succeeded in reviving EAEC, rejected all of ten years ago. He never gives up. In this instance he wishes to build a regional architecture in the Asia Pacific to match NAFTA and EU. He is trying to turn up the volume of Asia's communications by speaking collectively and in unison on the world platform, not as an isolated voice.

AMBASSADOR FOR PEACE

He is active in the world peace movement – mediated in the Iran Iraq war, took up the cudgels on behalf of Bosnia and Kosovo. More recently Malaysia has been to the forefront in sending humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and Iraq. He has initiated the Langkawi International Dialogue to promote greater international understanding and assist the development of the poorer countries. He is a frequent speaker on international platform like the recent Davos Meeting promoting peace and a more egalitarian world order. He himself puts his money where his mouth is with many community projects and economic initiatives to help the less fortunate on our planet. Malaysia's NEP was a role model for the Black Empowerment scheme in South Africa.



French President Jacques Chirac (L), chats with Malaysia's Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad upon arrival at the prime minister's office in Putrajaya, Tuesday, 22 July 2003. Bringing together two of the strongest opponents of the U.S.-led military invasion of Iraq



ROLE MODEL OF MODERATE, PROGRESSIVE ISLAM

Most pertinent of all however is that he has emerged on the world stage of late in one clear unchallenged role as a foremost moderate, enlightened Muslim leader in a world approaching a potential impasse between Islam and the rest. This new identity has taken him to the pinnacle of international diplomacy and into both the White House and the Vatican to meet the most powerful secular leader in the world and the most religious leader, respectively.

His new identity has suddenly dawned on the world that behaves as if they have just discovered him, with all the force of a road to Damascus experience. Yet he has been a role model of a moderate, successful, democratic Muslim leader all along. One article described him as having "come out" as if he had been in some kind of religious closet.

NEW ROLE AND IDENTITY

This brings me to his potential future role, as a mediator in the troubled Middle Eastern scenario and in the world of Islam, should the aftermath of the war in Iraq escalate into anything resembling Huntington's clash of civilizations. Not that he himself necessarily aspires to any such position. If he wishes to quietly retire and be left in peace we should respect this. But the world outside is likely to be knocking on his door. He hosted the recent meeting of NAM, an organization of 116 members or 4/5th the world's population and 2/3rd the membership on the UN. It ought to be a very influential body but had lost both perceived relevance and momentum. In the effort to revitalise it there are few with the credentials of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to spearhead the process. After successfully hosting the OIC Summit, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has brought in a new identity in the Muslim world. OIC boasts 57 members but in the past has been bedeviled by the failure to unite. Again Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad could be the catalyst.

Should he choose to quit the stage entirely, the loss will now be felt beyond these shores. In the international arena his has been the voice of moderation and reason in an emotionally charged climate. He speaks with courage without fear or favour and tells it like it is. He fights the cause of the poor and the under privileged.



Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad accepts a dinner invitation by the Libya President Col. Muammar Al-Gaddafi at his office Bab Al-Aziziyah

PR'S PROFESSIONAL ROLE AND IDENTITY

We in the PR profession need to take a leaf out of his book. There is a job to be done out there. Malaysia's image has been running on empty. We need to get our story out – the true story and raise the country's profile to match that of its leader. To do this, we need to tackle the perception gap that damages our Prime Minister and by overspill the country. Managing perceptions is a PR task. We handle public opinion. Public Relations can be redefined as managing risk to reputation. In the modern parlance we need to rebrand Malaysia.

Much will depend on a concerted communications campaign. We are after all up against the power of the press combined with the power of prejudice. But good will can also be secured by a systematic approach to our international relations identifying carefully targeted influentials and constituencies we need to reach. It will take a sustained effort – building a lifebelt of the contacts. Influencer mapping, perception audits – profiling are amongst the tools to support the effort. It has to

be a conscious effort. In the past we relied too much a letting things develop naturally and spontaneously. We have to make them happen.

The good news in that all this raises the profile of our profession. In the very early days PR was denigrated as merely a wining and dining fraternity. PRO's the skeptics would say were recruited at cocktail parties. The myth is exploded. In those days we were indeed "PRO's" nothing higher, in the corporate hierarchy, reporting incongruously in some cases to be Finance Manager, often a philistine when it came to PR. We now have an advisory function, which qualifies us for a place at the Board table and direct access to the CEO. *Interalia* we advise him on his global relations.

A new competency is involved. When one crosses national boundaries you cross cultural frontiers. International relations is a multicultural experience – and a challenge. But Malaysians are uniquely equipped for this. Our multiracial background has attuned us to a high degree of cultural sensitivity. We live by tolerance and an understanding of others. In this we can excel. In the global playing field business is a game of giants versus dwarfs and developing countries are the dwarfs. In cross-cultural relations Malaysia belongs with the giants.

Meanwhile we should honour our Prime Minister the super giant for taking such a visionary and such a strategic lead in the field of international relations and being an inspiration to our profession.



Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad (L) presents UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (R) with a Tepak Sireh, an ornate betel nut set used for special ceremonies in Malaysia, at the United Nations in New York, 25 September 2003. Accordingly to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the gift is a symbol of dialogue, diplomacy, friendship and cooperation



About The Writer

Datuk Dr. Paddy Bowie is Managing Director of Paddy Schubert Sdn Bhd, the Business Consultancy she set up in 1980. She is also a writer and a well-known political analyst.

Datuk Dr. Bowie was a UK State Scholar – educated at Manchester University and Oxford University. She has been 48 years in Malaysia and has taken up citizenship.

Datuk Dr. Bowie was previously Trade Relations Director on the Main Board of the Shell Group of Companies in Malaysia and Singapore.

She later became the Malaysia Country Manager of Business International, later the Economist Group. Now she runs her own Programme – the Malaysia Regional Programme, a peer group forum for leading investors, maintaining the Economist connection.

Datuk Dr. Bowie was the accredited ASEAN Trade Representative for the Strathclyde Regional Council of Scotland organising regular Trade Missions to ASEAN for Scottish companies and follow-up services for business penetration. Her Consultancy offers investment advice, facilitates business entry and strategic corporate services, catering for the Government Relations, Public Relations and commercial needs of a wide range of clients. Datuk Bowie's other specialism is communications. The consultancy offers a Corporate Writers' service, high-level communications courses and media training.

Datuk Dr. Bowie has been active in the management movement. A founder member of the Governing Council of the Malaysian Institute of Management she became its Chairman for many years and Vice President of its Court of Fellows. She also served a three-year tenure as President of the regional body, AAMO, the Asia Association of Management Organisations, and as Vice Chairman of CIOS, the World Body.

Offices held include:

Fellow of the Malaysian Institute of Management
Fellow of the Institute of Directors UK
Fellow of the Institute of Public Relations Malaysia
Former Chairman of the Advertisers' Authority Malaysia
Governor of AMCHAM the American Chamber of Commerce Malaysia
Member of the International Investors' Committee of the Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce

Datuk Dr. Bowie is well known as a speaker and a writer. She has addressed World Management Congresses at Munich, Caracas, New Delhi, Lima, Adelaide and Kuala Lumpur. She is a frequent speaker on the Conference circuit notably the Economist Conferences and the Pacific Rim Forum, in the US, Australia, and most East Asian countries.

In June 2001, her book "A Vision Realised: The Transformation of a National Oil Corporation", detailing the corporate history of Petronas was launched by Prime Minister, YAB Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. The publication of "The Governor", a biography of the late Tun Ismail bin Mohamed Ali, first governor of Bank Negara Malaysia, is due later this year.

She has contributed articles to FORTUNE Magazine and the former Euro Asia Journal published by INSEAD, specialising in multi-cultural management. She has written the Malaysia and the Singapore Section respectively of the Economist Business Guides. She writes a regular column of political and business analysis for BMCC, British Malaysian Chamber of Commerce. She produces and scripts documentary films for both the Public and the Private Sector. She brings out the Paddy Bowie Letter for the leading investors in her Malaysia Regional Programme.

In the last six months, Datuk Dr. Bowie has appeared on CNBC, been interviewed by Business Times Singapore, The Sun, Reuters and has written articles for the Washington Times and Royal Society of Asian Affairs.

Paddy Schubert Sdn Bhd has strong international links with Westminster Communications UK, Blumont Partners, Washington and Lou Hoffman in Silicon Valley.



Handling of Issues and Crisis

by Felix Abisheganaden

Commanding the attention of his people
is Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad

Handling of Issues and Crisis

BACKGROUND

By his hands-on, pro-active leadership style in seeing the nation through uncertain times, former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was able to instil fervour, energy and conviction into the daily lives of the masses. With each crisis turned to advantage and every obstacle overcome, false beliefs or limitations in his capabilities soon melted away and the nation resonated to a new timetable of change.

He succeeded in getting the entire nation to literally move to the beat of a different drummer by changing the tempo of the National Anthem from a gentle, lilting beat to that of a rousing, military-like march. And the people rallied behind him wholeheartedly.



THE PUBLIC RELATIONS CHALLENGES

His agenda was focused on change, not just administration. Change required altering the mindset of the masses and Challenges transforming the political structure. By re-naming the ruling party UMNO Baru, he literally "saved" it overnight after it had been deregistered by the High Court in 1988. Then there was the split in the party with the formation of Semangat 46; the tussle with the Malay Rulers over the Constitutional Amendment Bill in 1983, the suspension of five Supreme Court judges in 1988 and the removal of the immunity of Malay Rulers from prosecution in 1992.

Also, the definitive manner in which he dealt with the 1997 financial crisis, which won him world-wide acclaim.

WORLD CLASS PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES

All the way it was action in the public good. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad used to good effect all the public relations resources at his disposal – in the administration, the party machine and the Media – to get across his messages. Invariably, he always made it a point to obtain public understanding and support for his actions in solving issues. This in the end contributed immeasurably to his overall success as an outstanding communicator.

Managing crisis within UMNO

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's relationship with UMNO has been described as "the most tumultuous and turbulent" of all the Nation's four Prime Ministers. Among the many reasons for this are:

- The April 1987 challenge for the leadership of the party by then Trade and Industry Minister, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah. Although Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad won by a nail-biting 43 votes, the tradition of unchallenged party leadership had been ruptured.
- The 1988 filing of suits against UMNO by Razaleigh's supporters claiming that the party election had not been properly conducted and went against the provisions of the Societies Amendment Act. The High Court ruled in their favour and declared UMNO illegal. With a masterly stroke, "Dr. M" renamed the party UMNO Baru (new UMNO) and it was business as usual!
- Tengku Razaleigh then split from the party, taking with him thousands of UMNO members to form Semangap 46. He aligned his party with the Opposition Party Islam, only to return to UMNO with all his supporters in 1996.

The former Prime Minister was privately criticised for sounding "anti-Malay" when he addressed the Harvard Club of Malaysia dinner on "The New Malay Dilemma" in Kuala Lumpur in July 2002.

After making a strong plea for the Malays to "stop leaning on the crutches of Malay privileges to protect them," he talked of Malaysia's commitment to democracy.

The dilemma that the Malays and the peoples of Malaysia faced, he said, was whether we should in the name of democracy allow the country to be destroyed or should we ensure that people are not subjected to manipulations to the point where they will "use democracy to destroy democracy."

He drew attention to the fact that many so-called democracies prevented communists and fascists from participating in their elections. They did this, because they believed that if these parties won a democratic election they would put an end to democracy. He asked: "can we take a leaf from their book and risk condemnation for not being democratic?"

What about his speech that irked certain sections of the Malay community? Here are excerpts:

"Scholarships and places in universities for Malays at home and abroad are considered a matter of right and are not valued anymore. Those who get educational opportunities for some unknown reason seem to dislike the very people who created these opportunities."

"They (Malays) don't seem to appreciate the opportunities offered to them. Instead they become more interested in other things, politics in particular to the detriment of their studies."

"In business, the vast majority have regarded the opportunities given them as something to be exploited for the quickest return. They had sold off their opportunities to become sleeping partners in an arrangement cynically known as "Ali Baba." They would then go back to the Government for more licences, permits and shares."

"Why has this happened? The answer lies in the culture of the Malays. They are laid back and prone to take the easy way out."

"And the easy way out is to sell-off whatever they get and ask for more. This is their culture. Working hard, taking risks and being patient is not a part of their culture."

"Dependent as they are on crutches they remain weak. Their old dilemma was whether they should distort the picture a little in order to help themselves. The new dilemma is whether they should not do away with the crutches that they have got used to – which, in fact, they have become proud of."

"Perhaps because I am trained as a doctor I look at crutches differently. There was a time when doctors expected crutches to be used for life. Today they get their patients on their feet as soon as possible. Physiotherapy has been developed into a science with the aim of rehabilitating the incapacitated."

"There is a minority of Malays who are confident enough to think of doing away with the crutches, albeit gradually. But they are a very small minority. Their numbers are not going to increase anytime soon. They are generally regarded as "traitors" to the Malay race."

As usual the good doctor spoke his mind and received a standing ovation from the elite of the Harvard Club of Malaysia.

Constitutional Amendment Bill

Dr. M's key message: King & Rulers

Symbol of Unity for the People

One of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's toughest battles in office must have been his delicate tussle with the Malay Rulers over the Constitutional amendment Bill passed by both Houses of Parliament in August 1983.

The proposed changes to certain clauses in the Constitution, the Government explained, were related to "administrative procedures." They also enabled the Elections Commission to delineate boundaries for new Parliamentary and State Constituencies.

But the Rulers, on scrutinising it, felt that the changes would, in fact, scuttle their sovereign status. This resulted in the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong withholding Royal assent to the Bill. What followed was described by the media as a "Constitutional Crisis" which took four and a half months to solve.

When things got really tensed and it looked as though there was no way out, the Cabinet convened a special session and decided to give Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad a full mandate to "take whatever action to solve the impasse."

And solve it he did in his energetic - just-do-it, fashion

First he mounted a Public Relations campaign event to impress upon all concerned that the King and the Rulers were a "symbol of the unity for the people." That was his key message, which he never deviated from.

Being in such a privileged position, he said, "meant that the Rulers were non-partisan institutions and, therefore, are restricted from being involved in political matters." He made it clear too that the "spirit and principles" enshrined in the Constitution had in no way been jeopardised by the amendments.

He held mammoth publicity-generating public rallies in nine States explaining the Government's position and at the same time enjoying tumultuous public support for his stand. Truly, a great public relations strategy of winning third party endorsement.

UMNO Youth, UMNO Wanita and all State Menteris Besar backed him all the way. So did the Administrative and Diplomatic Officers' Association, the 500,000-strong rubber small holders and other non-political organisations.

Triumph for rationality and maturity

They met privately, taking note of the tremendous national support that "Dr. M" had garnered. On 15 December, exactly four-and-a-half months after the Constitutional Amendment Bill had been presented to Parliament it received Royal assent. 15 December was the original deadline for the Bill to be signed and gazetted to enable the Elections Commission to take steps to delineate the boundaries for new Parliamentary and State Constituencies.

It was a "triumph for rationality and maturity" was how the then deputy Prime Minister, Datuk Musa Hilam, described the strategy behind the campaign led by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

No Differential TREATMENT for Judges

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's political capacity was tested over the 1988 sacking of the Lord President, Tun Salleh Abas, and the suspension of five Supreme Court judges, (two of whom were later dismissed and the other three reinstated).

Rumblings against decisions handed down by the judiciary had started about two years earlier among political factions in UMNO.

Things came to a head in 1988 when several allegations were levelled against Tun Salleh Abas and, on the recommendation of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong suspended the Lord President.

Then, on the advice of the then acting Lord President, Tan Sri Hamid Omar, the King suspended five Supreme Court judges who appeared to have sided with Tun Salleh. In July that year, the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong set up a tribunal to hear charges against the five judges.

A six-member tribunal was headed by Supreme Court judge Tan Sri Hashim Yeop Abdullah Sani as chairman. Members were a Sri Lankan Supreme Court judge, Mark Damian Fernando, Singapore High Court judge, P. Coomaraswamy, and Malaysian High Court judges, Datuk Edgar Joseph, Jr, Datuk Eusoff Chin and Datuk Lamin Mohamad Yunus.

But Tan Sri Hashim stepped down as chairman because, as he then put it, "I want to dispel even the remotest appearance of lack of impartiality." Datuk Edgar Joseph, Jr took over the Chair. No additional member was appointed.

The five-member tribunal began its closed-door hearings from September 2 to 26 when it submitted its report to the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong. On October 6, 1988, the King acting on the recommendations of the tribunal commanded that two judges be removed from office and be given appropriate pension benefits. He also directed that the suspension order on the other three be revoked and that they be reinstated.

In an editorial published on October 8, 1988 the New Straits Times made this pertinent comment: "The myth that judges can do no wrong has been shattered. Judges are after all humans. They do err. And if the common people are subjected for lesser mistakes, either by being thrown in jail or sacked from their jobs, there is no valid reason to treat judges differently.

"It is in recognition of this basic rule of law, and taking into consideration the experience of other countries, that the originators of our Constitution had written into it the provisions for dealing with misbehaving judges."

In January 1989, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) meeting in Caracas, Venezuela recorded its dissatisfaction over some features of procedures preceding the suspension and removal of the judges.

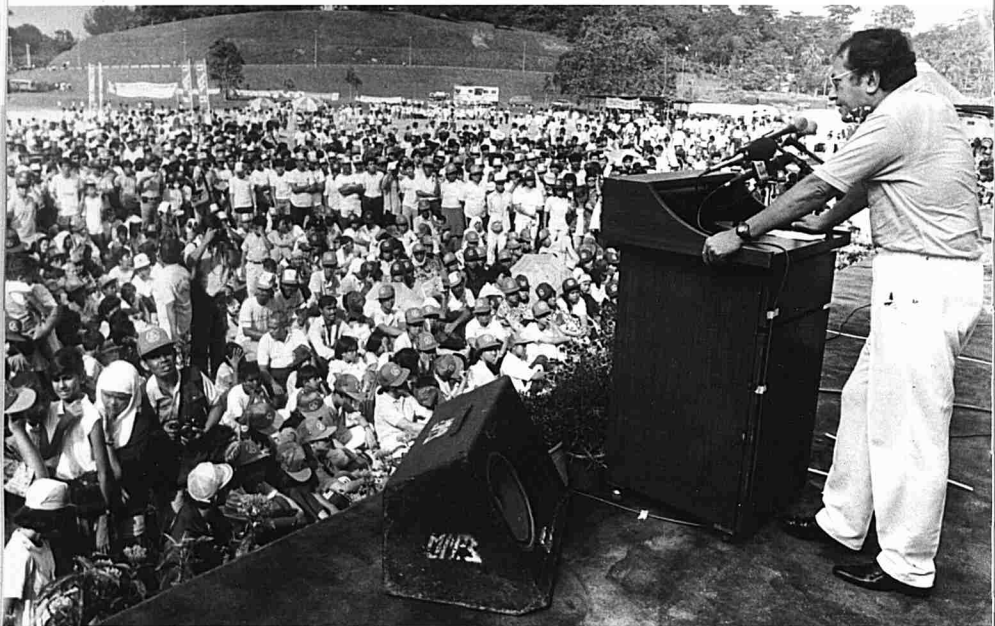
Then Lord President, Tan Sri Abdul Hamid, in a reply made through the former Attorney-General, Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman, said that it was not true that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had led a campaign attacking the judiciary and the rule of law as had been alleged.

"The Prime Minister was merely commenting on the conduct of a certain judge who was in the habit of making uncalled-for remarks totally unconnected with the case before him. 'The judge in question,' he said, 'had since been promoted as a Supreme Court judge.'"

In Tan Sri Abdul Hamid's view, the Prime Minister, like any other member of the public, was entitled to criticise a judge or his decision in any particular case provided it is made in good faith.



The six-member tribunal



At the Microphone

PM addressing participant at a big walk - Padang Merbok
on 22 March 1998

1997 FINANCIAL CRISIS: STANDING OVATION FOR TUN DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD

The former Prime Minister has received standing ovations for the manner in which he handled the 1997 Asian financial crisis. The controversial currency controls that he boldly introduced were severely ridiculed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. But "Dr. M" went ahead in order to protect the country from what he described as "rapacious currency traders and stock market manipulators."

It soon became apparent to him that the free exchange of the Ringgit, which promoted trade, was, in fact, a sensitive area of the economy. He swiftly introduced three significant measures. Firstly, he stopped the free exchange of the Ringgit abroad and pegged it at RM3.80 to one US Dollar.

Secondly, he put an end to short selling on the Central Limit Order Book (CLOB) which is Singapore's over-the-counter equity market trading mostly in Malaysian stocks. CLOB had been established following the delisting of Malaysian counters on the Singapore Stock Exchange.

Thirdly, much against his will, our "master builder" as some have called him, postponed a number of massive infrastructure projects that formed the backbone of his grand vision of a new Malaysia.

He also openly pointed a finger at US financier, George Soros for having led speculative attacks against Southeast Asian countries. (Initially Soros denied this, but later confessed his guilt).

"Dr. M" also told the IMF "No, Thank You" when it offered to include Malaysia in its more than US\$100-million plan to assist countries affected by the crisis. Thailand, Indonesia, and South Korea lamely accepted the offer, but Malaysia proudly rebuffed the IMF.

Now that Malaysia is once again on the growth path, those who had once criticised the "PM" – including George Soros – have given him "standing ovations" for what they describe as his "prudential measures" that have pulled the country through the financial storm.

In its latest annual assessment of Malaysia, the IMF said the pegging of the Ringgit had not misaligned its value. Another triumph for the leader who got the Nation to march to the beat of a different drummer.



About The Writer

As a journalist for 27 years with the Straits Times, Felix was in the frontline of a series of major events covering the 1957 Merdeka celebrations, the 12 year Communist insurgency, confrontation with Indonesia, the split with Singapore and the 1969 racial clashes in Kuala Lumpur. After the racial riots he was appointed a member of the National Goodwill Council, which helped restore order in the country.

During those years he was also the Malaysian Correspondent for Time Magazine. He is currently senior partner of Prestige Communications Sdn Bhd. Felix has spent a total of 50 years in communications.



Cross **Cultural** Relations

by Hamidah Karim

Cross Cultural Relations

I would define cross-cultural relations in the public relations context as a growing body of interpersonal communications that is patterned after a country's socio-economic priorities, value systems and cultural heritage.

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1 Interfaith celebrations – an extension of the 'open house' concept – have paved the way for Malaysians to respect and join in each other's religious festivals. Here the Hon. Prime Minister and wife join in the Christmas high tea reception of the Christian Federation of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur

2 The Yang Di-Pertuan Agong, Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin lending his royal presence to a Christmas Open House event in Malacca, making it a first, and significant milestone in Malaysia's cross-cultural relations

Cross-cultural relations differ from country to country because of the unique and sensitive involvement of its people and the dramatic changes that it goes through with time.

The practice of public relations in any cross-cultural environment must yet be the most challenging and 'idiosyncratic'. Whatever skills and models that can be preached or applied will have to be shaped in tandem with a nation's character, vision and people composition. A lot of credit goes to its leadership too.

This definition couldn't be truer when we examine the development of public relations and its progressive use in multiracial Malaysia. Because of our cross-cultural similarities, differences and preferences, the public relations practice of it has been honed to such an extent that Malaysia has become a role model for many others that may be faced with a similar multi-racial character.

The question that is pushed forward: How did we do it? Can it be translated into an equation, a formula or case model? Given the world's trend towards globalisation and the geo-political movement and mobility of peoples, more and more cross-cultural situations or scenarios are going to arise and develop, causing governments and leaderships to think seriously of socio-economic 'restructuring' programmes that minimize divisiveness and racial polarisation.

Generic public relations practices can only achieve limited success. In this respect public relations takes on a highly personalized hue as each country is faced with its own dynamism, its individualized target publics and its own interpretation of harmony and vision for its peoples.

It is my contention that the Malaysian use of public relations is well founded on two considerations: what we inherited (legacy and history) and the kind of changes that we wish to initiate (leadership and policy) for a brighter Malaysia.

The leadership factor is crucial as it provides the umbrella mechanism that oils the development of an integrated Malaysian identity. It also sets the tone and direction.

Some examples of this national effort include the country's national policies on education (curriculum), school structure (national, vernacular and religious types), English language, special status of the bumiputra, meritocracy and more.

These policies are by no means static, and as long as society has its own mind and a premium is set on public opinion, public relations will remain equally fluid and flexible. Policies can change and each time this happens, it causes public relations practice to be realigned. New messages and programmes have to be crafted. Simple as that.







When there are shortfalls brought about by these policies (either through bad execution or lack of will), resulting in the failure to deliver sound cross-cultural values, policy makers will understand that it is time to review the public relations approach and strategies.

The policies may have meant well but the public relations of it did not help 'reach' the publics or attain the objectives in the intended way. In Malaysia's case some of the policies have been well translated into action where the *rakyat* hugely benefits. In some other policies have fallen flat because of insufficient public relations campaign on the policies. The people always prefer the consultative approach.

We are advanced in this sense and we do not fool ourselves into thinking that public relations is the panacea for all our cross-cultural woes however interweaved the two might be.

We have also ended the era of 'hit-and-miss' public relations long ago. Our responsibility in maintaining peace extends beyond mere deliberate and planned public relations. This is to say we 'live' public relations or cross-cultural relations on a daily basis. It has become ingrained. Malaysians in all their cultural differences have been amply educated that for every untoward interracial incident there is a grave consequence. It is risk not worth taking for we value peace more. This has been entrenched in our psyche.

Thanks to the May 13 incident and racial clash, we learnt this lesson early. We are today more issue-oriented and any discussion or debate can be conducted objectively.

The firm hand of the Contry's leadership under Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad (now Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad) has created a distinct brand of public relations, an original, a one-of-its-kind that is highly insightful and visionary.

More significantly, cross-cultural relations are a highly proactive form of public relations. In an unprecedented manner and style, it has begun to 'deal' with issues related to cultural understanding, tolerance and cohesion in a more holistic manner that benefits our future generation.

I see this as turning point in Malaysia's own attitude to cope with intercultural change and the increasing demands of each ethnic group. For achieving peace and harmony there is now a niche for public relations professionals of the highest order, especially when it contributes towards cultivating the country's image locally and internationally.

Thus we now see a diminishing level of the 'Malay politeness' syndrome or unduly Chinese aggression in the economic sector. There are definitely less race-related issues being swept under the carpet. We have learnt to enhance, first and foremost, the Malaysian identity and then other ethnic considerations.

University students are the new generation that the Government aims to reach, nurture and invest new cross-cultural values. The trend today is to remake universities to reflect an open-minded attitude, reflective of its multiracial composition

COLOURFUL LABORATORY

The inspiration to blue-print public relations activity and thought is sourced from the very diversity of races that exists at our doorstep. The environment is a growing laboratory for intercultural study and success, depending on how we manage the situation. Coping with changes can become an art and science.

The diverse factors include the group's world-views, lifestyles, business conduct and ethics, mindset, attitude, perception and loyalty to nation-building. Cross-cultural relations portray a whole way of life of a people and what they hold dear and value most.

In this light there is no beginning or end to achieving the cross-cultural objectives of this country. It is a continuum of commitment. The constant change in variables simply renders inexhaustible any public relations approach or strategy or formula. I cannot say there is a best public relations approach or strategy although we have learnt largely through trial and error in the early years after *Merdeka*.

It is an exciting phenomenon but demanding of a leadership with a developed capability to mesh the public relations objective with 'what is best for the Malaysian citizen' or the country and not what is solely good for the Malay or Chinese or Indian or Kadazan.

Lastly, while the best policies are being laid down for the country in pursuance of inter-cultural happiness, it goes without saying that these policies or development programmes deserve only the best public relations input for success. No less. The reality lies in the power of public opinion that has been known to topple and dismantle systems and veto decisions even in the last minute. Policy makers should not discount this factor and there are adequate public relations talents in the country who know how to do it properly and professionally.

'Kite-flying' is a known communications technique where waters are tested before a policy is fully implemented. Campaigns are another public relations measure that rallies the *rakyat* to think the same across all ethnic groups and today, more interestingly, spin (political) doctors abound to generate publicity and attention to the issues at hand.

The issues affecting cross-cultural relations are plenty. Anything and everything can forward or retard mutual intercultural trust and tolerance. It all depends on the messages that these policies convey. And how they are carried out. More precisely, how they are structured and sustained.

In the early years of the aftermath of the 1969 riots the message was always one of *muhibbah*: It was exceedingly relevant as the different races had found it difficult to overcome the fear and lived in constant dread of a recurrence.

Simple intercultural programmes like the *Rukun Tetangga* scheme were introduced to bring together the different races to work towards a common cause (neighbourhood vigilance).

During religious and cultural festivals, Malaysians show a distinct sense of hospitality to neighbours, colleagues and friends alike with an 'open house' invitation for other races to join in the celebrations. This concept is still being practised today – in fact on a larger scale as the Government itself has adopted this platform to demonstrate its leadership value placed on tolerance and harmony among races.

Today, public relations programmes are more sophisticatedly mooted. This is because society is more literate, educated and well-informed. An outcome that has eventuated with the advent of the Internet. There is an inclination to be skeptical and pass any public relations overture as hype or propaganda. Public relations activity thus needs to be more selective and sincerely targeted.



The *Rukun Tetangga* scheme was Malaysia's first *muhibbah* programme that saw Malaysians standing together as they vigilantly secure their common neighbourhood through night patrols. It was the precursor of many more 'harmony' activities to come

Cultural cross relations

Malaysia stands out as a clear example of cross-cultural relations where people live side by side first as Malaysians and then in the privacy of their homes, as Malays, Chinese, Indians, Kayans, Ibans or whatever.

The extent of peace and harmony that exists in the social environment, place of work and other public venues has never really been measured. It may be perceived as either very real or superficial (with strong undercurrent). Tolerance and racial acceptance of each other's differences may be generally difficult to gauge because it is largely cultivated on the basis of one-on-one relationships and friendships either in the home environment or workplace (as different from 'stereotyped' relations).

For years Malaysians have learned to live and work within this framework. The country takes serious pride in this phenomenon and poses it as a living model for others to marvel at. It has even evolved into a 'selling point' or asset to help woo or attract investors and international tourists. The 'stability' factor is considerably enhanced by this cross-cultural maturity.

HOW DID IT ALL HAPPEN?

Many may comment that in this age and time cross-cultural relations is fast becoming common place, given the global ease of traveling and open-ended policies for letting in foreign workers or immigrants, who after a stipulated period, are permitted to settle here comfortably. This makes cross-cultural relations a continuing process of adaptation and assimilation.

Intermarriages have also provided its impetus, making it possible for different nationals to set up home and start families that have 'mixed heritages'. Melting pots are seen to be in the making everywhere today. The Malaysian cross-cultural scenario is no longer so unique in this sense.

When the British colonial masters divided and ruled the country the way it did (divided the community by economic function) a distinct multi-racial identity was consequently carved in stone. And commensurate with this was the mentality that emerged – the Chinese excelled in business, commerce and industry, the Malays remained in government service and/or rural (farming) areas while the Indians were good in the plantations, estates, railways and support industries.

The racial riots of May 1969 were a wake up call for all races, and brought great attention to the potential for disturbance and disruption if Malaysians did not learn to get along with one another. More importantly, they arrived at crossroads as to the kind of future they wanted and place in nation building. They consequently rejected the 'economic compartmentalization' of the past.

Out of this grew several efforts to redress the imbalanced structures left behind by the British legacy. The post *Merdeka* years under the first Prime Minister were constructive and saw the birth of several deliberate policies aimed at achieving racial unity and inter-racial harmony. Each policy had its own extensive masterplan of execution or implementation:

- Protect and boost the special position of the Malays to enable them to enjoy a growing economy [Constitution and Malay rights]
- Bridge the gap between the haves and have-nots
- Allow the Chinese and Indians their vernacular schools in difference to their cultural and linguistic differences
- Cultivate religious tolerance and places of worship
- Bring about a united Malaysian nation
- Put in place a democratic process for elections
- Establish Islamic ideals

It is interesting to note that in the aftermath of the 1969 riots the King or Yang Di-Pertuan Agong had addressed a saddened nation and one of His Majesty's remembered quotes was a reminder of our duty as loyal citizens:

"In a multi-racial society like ours we must all learn to live with one another, to understand one another, to respect one another's rights, religions and customs. This multi-racial society that we have found is not something that we have created; it is something that we came into, and thus it is for us to make the best of it. This we all had pledged when we claimed the right to rule ourselves. Twelve long years have shown how well we have made of our life in this multi-racial society and how much prosperity we have brought to the country. Every man has been served".

Cross-cultural relations is a given factor in Malaysia, it can be managed and harnessed to advantage or let loose to create havoc and a distressing environment that is detrimental to progress and development.



challenge

MAINTAINING A UNITED MALAYSIAN NATION

The reality is that cross-cultural happiness will always be an overriding objective in all that we do and strive for. Every Malaysian has to learn to live with each other's differences. To our credit is the vast experience that we have as a multi-ethnic society and a strong learning curve of past situations. We are able to tap from this and use it for effective public relations planning. The peaceful environment that has evolved over the years reflects cultivated lifestyles that are based on a 'give-and-take' outlook. Free from prejudice, the unwritten code requires each race to be accommodating and compromising for the general good of all.

The big question now remains: how do we maintain this and can we further improve on it?

the challenges



challenge

ENCOURAGING THE MEDIA TO WORK AND APPRECIATE THE NATION'S INTER-RACIAL GOALS

The reality is that the development of the media is in full concert with the nation's ubiquitous struggle for racial equality, balanced economic participation and a free expression of the ideals and goals of each ethnic group.

The media were singularly instrumental during the period following the 1969 racial riots in restoring public confidence and communal trust. They can continue in this positive mode. Viewed as an ally in this intercultural mission, only this time the media will need to be more proactive, as we need to impart new messages and educate the younger age groups on interracial responsibilities.

Looking at the print media headlines, editorials and picture captions used in just the past year, this process is already happening. Underscoring these print stories are two aspects: firstly, the specific messages that are being slowly worked into the public's consciousness. Secondly, the open manner in which issues of communal concern are being 'discussed' in the media, some reaching forum proportions.

There is a breaking away from the old communications style where race-related issues were considered sensitive and taboo for public discussion. Where previously there was an avoidance to raise or respond, these days, there is a willingness to identify and discuss issues that do not help foster interracial happiness.

Consider the following spectrum of bold and brave headlines that were run in the newspapers. Their cross-cultural content, carrying quotes from our leaders, convey a public relations decisiveness to cope with certain realities:

- PM: We're peace-loving
- Racial Polarisation a frightening possibility, warns DPM
- Student leaders told to foster racial unity
- PM: Chinese grads can help develop nation
- Varsity should promote peace education [Education Minister]
- Open houses prove integration alive and well
- Racial Integration – summer camps are aimed at encouraging young Malaysians of all races to work, play and learn together
- DPM speaks of three critical areas in nation building [education challenge, socio-economic inequities and the rise in hate politics and hate culture]
- PM: It's time to end this debate [on the issue of English language as a medium of instruction in schools]
- Schools have been 'hijacked' [by those who are bent on promoting Islam and alienating non-Muslims]
- Hijacked by religious bigots [on religious discrimination and bigotry]
- Parting ways of closed minds [on the vision of multi-ethnic Malaysia]
- Media's duty of preserving harmony
- National service a good move for all Malaysians
- National service will promote patriotism
- How media can help role of national integration
- Education system the only option left to help all our children integrate
- Malays must take up the challenge [on need to change attitude]
- Change in mindset key to achieving excellence [on academic achievements of Malays]
- Racial harmony, political stability right foundation for forging national identity
- The politics of unity in diversity
- Malaysia a model for other countries in promoting peace
- Dr M – the moderate voice of Islam [on religious' extremism]
- Community centers for closer ties
- Varsity merit system stays [introduction of the merit system]
- Fostering unity through sport
- Thank god for peace, open house
- Vision school concept grows big
- Chinese wedding in true Malay style
- Leaders must ensure Malaysia has a racially balanced army
- and more

The trend is set. It is my belief that the more the media 'talk about it', the more open-minded Malaysians will become about their cultural, social and religious differences and backgrounds. Their tolerance levels will undoubtedly become more disciplined and enduring, a hallmark of a matured and productive multiracial society. A tremendously high value is subsequently placed on peace. Malaysia stands for peace.

challenge

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT PROGRAMMES THAT CUT ACROSS ALL RACES AND CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

The reality is that Malaysians have yet to fully think of themselves as Malaysians first. This is naturally easier said than done. Public relations programmes must address this concern. Being Malaysians first (and last) does not in any way threaten the individual's race, culture or religion. The public needs to be reassured in this respect. When this happens we can expect less of an emotion-based response or reaction to interracial programmes that have to be introduced. And it might well pave the way for the introduction of a merit system and the discontinuance of economic and financial privileges to the disadvantaged. These features are the bane of cross-cultural misunderstanding.

challenge

EDUCATING THE YOUNGER GENERATION

The reality is that the younger generation did not experience the May 13 riots and cannot fully visualize the pain and tragic consequences of interracial strife. Neither are they vivid in imagination of the struggles of nation-building. They are too removed and their time is marked with a different set of values and preferences.

A campaign is needed to target the new generation and their minds. A different paradigm has to be constructed for them, especially on nation building. They wouldn't know except for what they may read from books. The educating process should begin now as investment measure. The Prime Minister's vision school is one example of such an effort. The idea has a future but how many races completely identify with it, much less understand its concept?

Materials should abound on the subject of intercultural values and how they are incorporated into every aspect of the Malaysian way of life – from parenting to schooling to socializing. What does it mean to be a Malaysian? The soft approach is always better and getting them young is considered proactive public relations.

World Class Public Relations Practices

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has instituted several policies and measures that underwrite interracial understanding and harmony, attracting the attention and admiration of others around the globe, especially countries that have multi-ethnic populations.

His initiatives are world class because firstly, they have produced results. Secondly, they are in tandem with modern day demands and relevance. Therefore, for his bold and timely initiatives, there are others who would wish to emulate his strategies and winning formulae. This is the best form of feedback for any public relations practitioner.

Over a 20-year period when Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was at the helm, his policies have reaped untold dividends for the rakyat. He is indeed aware of the fundamental public relations components that should be built into the execution of his policies. Although his style may not always carry across too sweetly, it is results he is after and that counts.

His management will always contain a public relations dimension because of the cross-cultural diversity that he has to work with.

The initiatives have singled him out as a turbo-charged leader who is unafraid to look at things in the eye and direct the holistic mounting of the country's image in all respects. His proposition prepares Malaysians not only as performing citizens, but to also carry this identity with pride when venturing into the global arena.

Public relations is intertwined with cross-cultural relations. They are interrelated. You can't do one without persevering with the other. A two-in-one or one-for-two.

Some of the Prime Minister's outstanding and more recent contributions to a more secure Malaysia include:

- Vision school for greater integration
- Merit System in universities (away with quotas and lesser entrance qualifications)
- Role of religious schools and curriculum (termination of funding and resources)
- Teaching of the English language in national type schools versus the vernacular schools
- National service for all
- Admission of more non-Malays in the Police and Armed Forces
- Neutralising Islam extremism by offering Malaysia as leader for uniting the Islamic nations of the world
- Nurturing university students to think less communal and more of national identity
- *Muhlibbuh* (goodwill) activities – 'open houses' for all religious/cultural festivities

To understand where these policies and programmes are heading is to glimpse the strength of public relations acceptance in the man.

If I may half-guess his strategy, public relations is co-incidental to this great leader and architect of peaceful cross-cultural relations. They may be one and the same, implicitly feeding into each other. Public relations is only a label in this sense.

Whatever it is the Prime Minister is a natural at the game and indeed he is his own best public relations counselor.



About The Writer

Hamidah Karim began her communications career as a lecturer of mass communications at UiTM, Shah Alam in 1974. Her major areas of specialisation included cross-cultural communications and public relations.

She pinnacle her teaching experience and career when she became dean of the Faculty of Mass Communications after which she left to join the private sector in 1981.

The next seven years were served as consultant at Eric White Associates Sdn Bhd (of the Hill & Knowlton Group), then the largest public relations agency in the world.

She was specifically put in charge of 'bumiputra affairs' indicative of the 'hey days' of the New Economic Policy (NEP) that had aimed to level the playing field for especially the Malays and restructure companies to reflect local equity.

Hamidah received her primary education in Singapore, lower secondary education in Kota Bharu, Kelantan and completed her upper secondary in Taiping, Perak.

She earned her undergraduate degree in English (Hons) from the University of Malaya in 1970, and her masters in Interpersonal Communications from Ohio University, US, in 1974.

Currently, the writer manages Prestige Communications Sdn Bhd (PCSB), one of the longest operating public relations consultancies in Malaysia. PCSB was set up in 1987.

A regular speaker at public relations and communications conferences, locally and internationally, Hamidah's derived professional belief is: "if knowledge is not shared then it can't be that worth learning or acquiring".

In 1991 she was invited by Unesco to team research into the communication needs of several countries in Central Asia in its transition from the old central command regime to a free market economy and free Press. The project covered Iran, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.



Communicating A National Agenda

by Ghazalie Abdullah

Communicating A National Agenda

OF DREAMS, A VISION AND REALITY

The best-laid stratagems can fade but not this one that has in the last two decades, elevated the national, economic and social prosperity of Malaysia. From the very beginning it appeared a colossal challenge – one that would require every conceivable effort including public relations skills to expound the merits. To turn Malaysia into an industrialised country befitting the league of developed nations from a dream that spun on wheels was deemed by many as just a dream. Former freelance television newscaster and now public relations consultant Ghazalie Abdullah traces how the momentum began from a dream, into a vision, and ultimately a runaway reality...

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad
at the launching Proton Perdana



Proton Waja prowess proved



There are several methods of jump-starting an emerging economy but it needs a man of far-ranging vision and determination to channel the disparate elements into a coherent whole. Yes, on paper everything appears temptingly attainable but transforming ambitious plans into reality is frequently fraught with trials and tribulations. Often, the best laid stratagems fade into a mirage, unable to stand the scrutiny of broad daylight.

When then Malaya gained its independence from the British colonial masters in 1957, the country was nothing but a commodity driven economy. Rubber and tin were the mainstays. Then, when Malaysia emerged in 1963, oil palm was later counted in. But a commodity dependent country was always at mercy to the perils of world demand.

Weaning a traditional, agriculture-based economy into one concentrating on manufacturing and value-added goods is a quantum leap. When prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad conceived the fabled notion of a Malaysian national car to spearhead industrialisation, one that would compete with established marques, the project was greeted either with derision or deemed unworthy of further discussion.

But within a single generation and despite the criticisms from the oracles of doom, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad single-handedly propelled the nation towards industrialisation with the national car project and instilled a sense of pride in being Malaysian.

Naturally, many a spanner was thrown into the works. When the national car was announced, there were cries this was a pipe's dream destined to vanish into smoke. When the Proton Saga took shape, sour grapes muttered darkly it was no more than a Japanese car cosmetically dressed in Malaysian garments. Even when Proton cars proved to be thoroughly roadworthy, envious detractors denounced its market domination was due to divine government intervention, concession and protection.

So when Proton cars took to the United Kingdom by storm and praises were sung by the British medias, the world woke up to a new alignment of parity. As if further proof was needed, the last vestiges of doubt were put to rest when the highly influential Consumers' Association of Great Britain conducted a major survey and declared what Malaysians had known all along - Proton emerged as the 'Most Dependable Car in Britain'! This accolade relegated established British marques into the shadows, and elbowed aside other great continental names from Germany and Italy.

The fact 'Malaysia Boleh' (Malaysia Can!) is now an inherent part of our culture is testimony to the prime minister's leadership. By paving the path and blazing open new, uncharted horizons, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has imbued us with a strong sense of purpose.

As EON chairman Tan Sri Dato' Seri Dr Mohd Saleh bin Sulong observed, "It took one man to have the vision, courage and will to initiate and put into realisation the National Car Project."

Today, Proton cars dominate Malaysian roads with the lion's share of the local car market. Proton cars are now so entrenched as an intrinsic part of Malaysian life, many find it hard to believe it is only a mere 18 years when the first Proton was unveiled to an astonished and admiring public.

The wildly successful saga of the Proton is how Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's vision of a national car project has benefited countless Malaysians who now realise "Malaysia Boleh" has become a public relations clarion call to achievement and national pride.

In hindsight, it is with relief Malaysians realise the seeds were germinated back in 1978 when a million Ringgit was a vast sum. To initiate such a project today would consume billions. Back when fax machines and computers were reserved for large companies and laptops were unheard of, it was decided the automotive industry would best provide the catalyst to spawn not only a national car, but also ancillary industries, opportunities and jobs.

The national car project was the litmus test and its launch in 1981 was a red-letter day. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad took a personal interest in expediting progress and the Heavy Industries Corporation of Malaysia (HICOM) was formed to spearhead the ambitious programme. Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional Berhad (PROTON) was created in 1983 to manufacture the national car while Ederan Otomobil Berhad (EON) was established a year later as sole distributor with private sector participation.



EON Autofairs – customer hypermart convenience all under one roof



Proton Saga wins admiration from Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad

For Malaysians, 1 September 1985 will remain one of the most historic days. It was when the first Proton Saga car rolled out to euphoric cheers. To foster further pride, a nation-wide contest was organised to decide the name of the first model. 'Saga' was unanimously chosen for obvious reasons and Sergeant Ismail Jaafar went down in history as the man who submitted the model name. For the first time, the Ministry of Transport allowed the brand name and a number to be used as a licence plate.

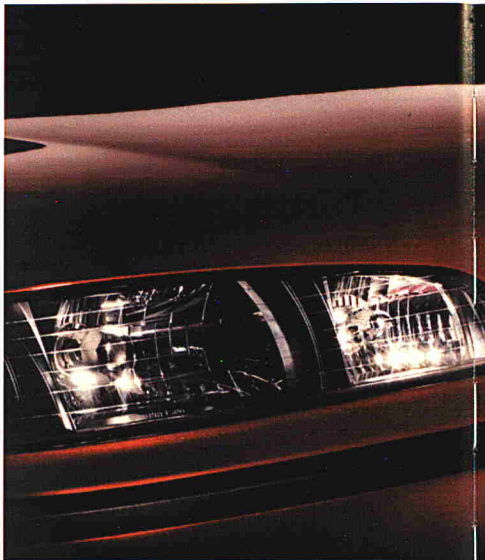
The first Proton Saga sold for a record RM24,000, the lowest price for a 1300 cc vehicle. Sales boomed. Within the first year, 40 sales branches and 41 sales dealers were set up, culminating in 54 sales branches and 125 sales dealers by 2002. Over the years, new models were introduced like Saga Magma 8 Valve in 1987, Saga Magma 12 Valve in 1990, Iswara in 1992, Wira in 1993, the Perdana limousine in 1995, Wira Diesel in 1996, the flagship Perdana Corporate Edition in 1997 and the Waja in 2000.

In the first year, 7,494 cars were sold by EON, peaking at 140,963 vehicles in 1997. Today, more than 1.6 million Proton cars have been put on the roads by EON at an average of 100,000 cars per year in the last 18 years. Since then, total sales have amounted to over RM40 billion and in the process paying over RM8 billion in taxes to the government. Assets for EON also leap-frogged from a modest RM101 million in 1986 to a staggering RM32.2 billion in 2002.

In the early eighties, skeptics sneered at the minimal 30 per cent Malaysian content inside each Proton Saga. Today the tables are turned in our favour as each Made-in-Malaysia Proton is truly that with over 85 per cent of locally manufactured components inside the car.

Proton cars have been exported to over 50 countries and are spotted in such unlikely places as Reykjavik, Iceland. It has become the buzzword for practicality, economy, value and above all, dependability. As Britain's Consumers Association results proved once again, Proton just keeps crossing the finishing line laps ahead of the competition. Without even trying or angling for pole position, it had the coveted title tossed literally onto its lap!

And so from prototype to Proton to Lotus cars (Britain's last and finest marques with a proud pedigree tested and proven on the circuits), Proton cars have arrived. Since the acquisition of Lotus, synergy and economies of scale as foreseen have again been proven true. EON, the original distributor, has placed more than 1.6 million Proton cars on the road – a phenomenal task by every measure.



As we move to new horizons, one can look back at these many attainments in our national, economic and social prosperity, and say fervently – never has one nation owed so much to one man, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the longest serving Prime Minister of Malaysia.



About The Writer

Ghazalie Abdullah is the Chief Executive of Ghazalie Rafeah Ali & Associates Sdn Bhd, a Bumiputera public relations consulting firm he founded in May 1987. Ghazalie began in the mass communications industry when he went on the airwaves of Radio Malaysia as a freelance announcer at the age of 17, serving both the domestic and overseas networks. A further 17 years later and in careers that spanned the hotel, entertainment, broadcasting and public relations industries, he went on to present the news on TV3.

Today, in addition to his job as CEO of a PR firm, he is dedicated to the public relations industry serving as the Vice President of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC Malaysia Chapter), an auditor for the Public Relations Consultants Association of Malaysia (PRCAM), and an editorial and public relations committee member for the Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA). He is also a member of the Institute of Public Relations Malaysia (IPRM) for more than a decade.

Ghazalie was recently credited for Edaran Otomobil Nasional Berhad's win of three top honours in a single sweep, the first ever by a corporation at the IPRM Crystal Awards 2002 – for Best Consumer Relations, for the Overall IPRM Crystal Award and for Most PR Savvy CEO conferred on EDN managing director Datuk Adzmi Abdul Wahab.



Mahathir: Public Relations Champion for **ICT** in Malaysia

by Kiranjit Kaur, PhD

Mahathir: Public Relations Champion for ICT in Malaysia

A brand – Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, fourth prime minister of Malaysia – who would have thought of that? But a brand, and a well-known one at that – Mahathir brand, he is. His single most important successful impact in the international arena has been in the area of Information and Communications Technology, or ICT, although he has also contributed vastly in other areas.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has effectively played a champion role for the Multimedia Super Corridor, or MSC, and ICT in Malaysia. He marketed the industry using technological rather than political arguments. He converted the negative aspects, such as Malaysia having very little technology background, to achieve positive perceptions of the ICT strengths that could be had in Malaysia. In addition, his attendance and active participation in international, regional and national road shows brought about international recognition to the role of government in developing national markets. The MSC project could be said to be the most highly campaigned regional development effort in a specific area. And, there was a strong presence made by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in this effort.

He may not have held the job title of "public relations professional" but Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad appears to have practiced the characteristics of the profession often enough in his political profession to be perhaps dubbed the public relations champion for Malaysia. A member of parliament at age 39 in 1964, a deputy prime minister in 1976, and prime minister of Malaysia since 1981, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was dubbed a "Master Planner" (by Time Magazine prior to the currency crisis in mid 1997). Almost everything he did, he seems to have planned with a purpose to achieve a specific reputation for the nation. The way the word publics is key in public relations practice. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad also had his "publics" as a priority in his plans. It looks as if he planned for the local, national, regional and international publics. He designed messages for each public to achieve specific responses to his various projects.

Public relations is about recognizing problems and opportunities in an organization and the role of strategic publics in them. It is also about correctly prescribing the solution to the appropriate publics to manage and enhance the situation. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is known to have said that he used his training as a medical doctor to make decisions for the nation. His strategy process was through identifying, analyzing, and diagnosing before prescribing.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad thus focused on eradication of poverty and equitable distribution of wealth among the Malaysian people through creating a bigger pool of opportunities. He took steps to systematize the government's administration to invigorate and develop the country. Workflow charts and office manuals for government officials were created to ensure everyone knew their responsibilities (Mahathir, 1999).

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad enthralled by Nur Izzah Idris's involvement in a computer project at a Vision School in Bangi





Launch of Cyberjaya on 9 July 1999



Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad promoted closer ties between government and business. He has used the privatization programme to make the private sector the main engine of growth for the nation. For example, broadcasting was privatized, which led to the development of TV3, NTV7, the satellite station ASTRO, and the set up of several privately owned radio stations. Telekom Malaysia, the leading telecommunications company in Malaysia, was also privatized, and several new service providers, such as MAXIS and DIGI, were given licenses to operate in efforts to increase the telecommunications services in the country, especially the mobile phone services.

He also got Malaysians to focus on the future, which he says is his single greatest achievement (Mahathir, 1999). He did this by creating a long-term vision called Vision 2020 in 1991.

THE ICT VISION

The sixth challenge in the nine strategic challenges set out towards realizing Vision 2020 is "the establishment of a scientific and progressive society, a society that is innovative and forward-looking, one that is not only a consumer of technology but also a contributor to the scientific and technological civilization of the future" (Mahathir, 1999, p. 42).

In the context of ICT, this Vision meant to harness the full potential of ICT to achieve a knowledge society in an advanced industrial society. Malaysia was to leapfrog the conventional development stages to achieve this goal. There was to be extensive use and application of ICT in the process of developing this knowledge society that will emphasise change and value creation (NITC, 2000, p. 122).

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's plan thus, was to develop a world class multimedia and content industry. He saw ICT as the enabler and facilitator of the Information Age. He believed the advancement of the Malaysian and the economic agenda was through developing and using ICT. He set up the National Information Technology Council (NITC) to develop the people, infrastructure (hard and soft infrastructure), and applications (NITC, 2000).

Public relations includes looking into the crystal ball to envision the future based on past and current developments. Practitioners have to thoroughly research and analyse the situation and environment in which they operate and anticipate problems and opportunities so they can plan the necessary strategies to meet these challenges effectively. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has done an almost thorough job of anticipating and planning for the nation to foray and compete globally by using ICTs.

However, he also believed that one first had to learn from others (Western culture, particularly) by speaking their language. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad wrote "We have to learn the language of international communication, and the language of telecommunications, of computers, is the Internet" (Mahathir, 1999, p.40). He often talked about learning from other cultures and changing to co-exist with the rest of the world. A requirement for public relations is to know and understand cultures of all strategic publics to communicate effectively. It appears that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has applied this perspective to ICT in his efforts to promote the MSC.

THE MULTIMEDIA SUPER CORRIDOR CREATION

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has spoken about making a bold move into the Information Age by launching the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC). This he has said was a way for Malaysia to shift from the Industrial Age to a borderless Information Age, a globalised economy where borders were no longer a protection from "predatory economies" (Mahathir's Speech, 1997). 1994 saw the inception of the Multimedia Super Corridor project. MSC, the Silicon Valley of Malaysia, was Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's tool to create and promote the knowledge based economy and society that he desired for the nation.

Ever the mover and shaker of things, he expedited matters to bring about the possibility of the MSC and its benefits instead of waiting for market forces. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has laid the foundation for the consumption and use of ICT to progress towards modernization and development through Vision 2020. The fourth Prime Minister has provided a global infrastructure. He has pushed for ICT and governance. He has pushed for preservation of culture in an internet worked world. He has moved to create a knowledge society and a knowledge economy. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has explained that the MSC occupies a central place in the overall national plan.

As the public relations person for Malaysia, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has created an understanding and acceptance of the MSC and what it has to offer to the world. In his speech at the conference for investors in the Multimedia Super Corridor at Los Angeles in 1997, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad told the audience "We offer the Multimedia Super Corridor as a gift to the world, a global bridge to the Information Age that will enable genuine mutual enrichment for our partners possessing the vision to participate." He continued "We need your vision, creativity, entrepreneurship and skill to give life to the MSC."

The MSC Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad envisioned appears to offer an enabling environment, which includes excellent physical infrastructure; soft infrastructure of supporting laws, policies and practices; an Open Multimedia Network and competitive rates; and a one-stop implementing agency - Multimedia Development Corporation (MDC) to process applications from investors and to manage and develop the MSC. Seven flagship applications are offered. Also, Malaysia offers a ten-point Multimedia Bill of Guarantees, which ensures the provision of the enabling environment for investors in the MSC. Some of these include unrestricted employment of foreign workers, no censorship of the Internet, freedom of ownership, competitive tariffs, and responsible management of the MSC.

What Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had was an excellent product to promote to the world's IT investors. His communications and road shows to promote this product around the world were executed strategically. He, as the country's CEO, made sure he was heavily involved in this promotion. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad set up an International Advisory Panel for MSC and appointed some of the top gurus of the IT industry to this Panel.

Bill Gates, Microsoft founder, said "Malaysia offers a blueprint through the MSC initiative for how a developing country can use technology to move to the forefront of modern industry" (cited in Hng, 1998, p. 12). He was referring to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's plan to transform the Malaysian's social life and work ethos through the MSC flagship applications, including the application of smart cards, electronic government, telemedicine, and smart schools. A location shift of data centers by some international companies, including a few from the United States, to the Multimedia Super Corridor is evidence of the status conferral on its viability as an ICT hub in the region as well as around the world.

Recently, MSC was elected to represent the Asian region at the Smart Community International Network (SCIN), a Dutch initiative. This was the first Asian intelligent country to be so elected. The MDC chief executive officer was reported to have said that this reflects that MSC is widely recognized as one of the leading regional ICT hubs and providers of world class ICT infrastructure. This network aspires to become a leading platform for international agenda-setting, benchmarking, networking, and providing first-line information services (New Straits Times, 4/3/03).

Generally, Mahathir has practiced public relations management to the "T" in this project to sell MSC to the strategic investor publics. He also has introduced a different regime in the aspect of regulation of the ICT industry in Malaysia.



Mahathir: Public Relations Champion for **ICT** in Malaysia

REGULATORY INNOVATION

Convergence of media, computers, and telecommunications was a concept very few had any idea of, including Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. However, he made it his business to find out from experts what this would and could mean to the country. He has created awareness and promoted an understanding of ICT, a borderless world and its implications among his cabinet and support agencies to prepare Malaysians to embrace this new global development.

To demonstrate commitment to the concept, a new federal ministry, Ministry of Energy, Communications and Multimedia – one of the first of its kind in the region, if not the world – was established to reflect this phenomenon of convergence. A primary role for this Ministry is to facilitate convergence and ICT growth, and it has the cooperation of several agencies including the Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), MIMOS, and MDC to do so.

A new Act, the Communications and Multimedia Act (CMA), was legislated in 1998 to provide for a regulatory framework to harness the potential of convergence and to drive the growth of the communications and multimedia industry (MCMC, 2003). It was to

replace all previous regulations pertaining to this area, including the Broadcasting Act 1988 and the Telecommunications Act of 1950, which were repealed in 1999.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was pragmatic to recognize the need for self regulation of this industry, which was facing a rapidly changing and convergent environment. He appears to understand the dire need for the government to work closely with the industry to keep on top of convergence and other industry development issues. Thus, this Ministry, through its regulatory agency – the Communications and Multimedia Commission, promotes and facilitates self-regulation, and ensures the civil society plays a role in relevant issues, particularly on consumer and content matters.

Again this move to innovate shows the ability of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to read a situation effectively and use pragmatism and foresight to achieve set goals. Thinking outside the box and using creativity to meet challenges, known and unknown, are necessary assets in public relations. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad serves as an example to the public relations practitioner.



Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Launch of Phase II, second right
Datuk Dr. Mohamad Arif Nun, second left Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi,
left Tan Sri Abdul Halim Ali, Chairman M5S – 5 September 2003



Malaysian fourth Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is
mobbed by handshakes seeking Japanese students as he arrives
at the Meiji University in Tokyo Thursday, 7 June 2001.
Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was conferred an honorary doctorate
at the university

CHALLENGES

This rapidly advancing industry has however, yet to meet several challenges. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's vision did not seem to have filtered down fully to his subordinates. After the initial active participation by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, there could have been more continuity and aggressive follow-up in promoting Malaysia as an ICT hub. Several Memorandum of Understanding did not materialize and imports benefitted more than exports. Great achievements in the content industry too have yet to be realized. In addition, though Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad tried to promote an education system to assist in creating a knowledge society, Malaysia has still some way to go before becoming one. Agencies entrusted to deliver a social master plan to achieve that aim do not seem to have been coordinated sufficiently, and have yet to show the full success.

As a concluding remark, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, as Prime Minister of Malaysia is perceived to be on top of what the future in ICT means to the nation and its importance towards achieving his Vision 2020 goals. Everyone who is anyone in IT has probably listened to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad speak on his vision for ICT and MSC. He has successfully employed public relations and communication strategies to brand himself as a champion of the developing world.



About The Writer

Dr Kiranjit Kaur is an Associate Professor in the Public Relations Department, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA. She has a BA (Honours) (University of Science, Malaysia), MSc (Public Relations) (Boston University) and PhD (Mass Communication) (University of Maryland).

She is on the Board of Council Members for the Institute of Public Relations Malaysia.

She is also a member of the International Communication Association, Asian Mass Communication and Information Center, and Association for Educators in Journalism and Mass Communication.





Public Relations Challenges in **Financial** Relations

by Sharifah Rozita

Public Relations Challenges in Financial Relations

The 1997 Economic Crisis: Redefining Financial Communications

BACKGROUND

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, ex-Prime Minister of Malaysia is Asia's longest serving and most enduring political leader. Under his astute two-decade leadership, he fostered rapid and equitable industrialisation of what was a backward agro-based colony. As the principal architect of Malaysia's economy, he has been the decisive factor in Malaysia's transformation into a rapidly developing Southeast Asian nation.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad can claim credit for an era of multiracial stability, economic openness and public investments that raised the incomes of Malaysians by almost 6% a year for 20 years. The nation faced its fair share of roller-coaster rides in its development, but it was certainly the 1997 financial crisis that truly tested Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's economic leadership and brought out what could probably be a case study of financial communications today. He formulated his own brand of solutions to the crisis – going against internal and external criticism and conventional wisdom to implement stiff measures including capital controls to prevent the nation's economy from going under. This radical policy measure seriously challenged the free-market global capitalist ideology, which he said had “failed disastrously.” In time of course, world opinion against him turned to praises as the Malaysian economy recovered stronger and faster than many others similarly affected in 1997. His words are now conventional wisdom to many.

THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

In mid-1997, Malaysia was hit hard by the financial crisis triggered by the speculative attack on the Thai baht. The deterioration in market sentiments and an erosion in investor confidence resulted in a massive outflow of short-term capital, a drastic decline in the value of the ringgit and a steep fall in the stock market.

Under Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's leadership, the Malaysian government embarked upon a systematic counter-offensive designed to mitigate the influence of external forces and retain a degree of national policy autonomy. He introduced a series of policy packages to deal with the crisis.

Initially, Malaysia adopted measures that included many features of the International Monetary Fund's prescription for recovery: reducing the fiscal expenditure by 20% and tightening monetary policy. These remedies however, did not work — the economy rapidly contracted. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad then undertook some drastic steps.

He set up the National Economic Action Council (NEAC) and tasked it with the responsibility of preparing the National Economic Recovery Plan. The Plan recommended measures to stabilise the currency, restore market confidence, maintain financial market stability, improve economic fundamentals and address the equality and socio-economic agenda. Among others, this Plan reversed the policy of reducing public expenditure by introducing a stimulus package of RM7 billion, and eased monetary policy by gradually reducing Bank Negara Malaysia's intervention rate from 11% to 6% and lowering statutory reserve requirement from 13.5% to 4% in stages.

To strengthen the financial sector, the Government established Danaharta, the national asset management company to address the issue of rising non-performing loans in the portfolios of the banking sector. Danamodal was created to recapitalise and consolidate the banking sector and the Corporate Debt Restructuring Committee was established to facilitate voluntary debt restructuring of viable companies.

On September 1, 1998, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad instituted selective capital controls to regain monetary independence and insulate the economy from external currency turbulence. The ringgit was pegged at RM3.80 to the US dollar. A 12-month holding period was imposed for foreign portfolio investment to deter the movement of short-term capital and prevent excessive volatility in domestic financial markets. Following

improvements in the domestic economy, this condition was later relaxed with the adoption of the repatriation levy. The economy rebounded from a contraction of 7.4% in 1998 to record a strong growth of 5.8% in 1999 and 8.5% in 2000. The accompanying low inflation rate, strong trade surplus and improved reserves reflect the fundamental strength and resilience of the economy.



The Prime Minister officiating the new Securities Commission in Bukit Kiara — 27 February 1999



The Prime Minister inspecting the mould for minting coins during the launch of The Royal Mint of Malaysia accompanied by the Governor of Bank Negara Malaysia, Datuk Zeti Akhtar Aziz and the Managing Director of the Mint Datuk Megat Wabab

KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's move to take Malaysia another step up to becoming a knowledge-based economy is pretty much in line with his visionary, sometimes radical, thinking and leadership pattern. After successfully transforming into an industrial economy from its agricultural roots in the past three decades, Malaysia is now ready to move forward in its mission to become a developed society by 2020. One of the strategies for attaining this mission is the establishment of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) as a world-class IT hub for the introduction and synergistic expansion of IT-related and multimedia industries. According to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the MSC is Malaysia's gift to the world. It would be a global test-bed for cutting-edge technologies in the new information age. In his vision, he says: "Malaysia is crossing the threshold into the information age with hope and confidence. We are embracing the borderless world, and opening ourselves up to new forms of partnership and commerce made possible by revolutionary changes in computing, communications, capital flows and consumer tastes. While some see these changes as a threat, Malaysia sees them as an unprecedented opportunity to 'leapfrog' our development and achieve our Vision 2020 goals."

In the words of Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates, "Malaysia offers a fine blueprint, through the MSC initiative, for how a developing country can use technology to move to the forefront of modern industry."

PROMOTING INVESTMENT

As perhaps Malaysia's most widely travelled Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has lent himself to the role of the country's leading financial communicator. His visits to many countries, with the mission of bringing in foreign investment (FDI), has reaped rewards: transfer of technology and managerial expertise, employment creation, new product development, trade generation and access to new markets. His key consistent message: Malaysia will continue to provide a liberal and competitive environment for investors by ensuring the provision of suitable supporting infrastructure; making well-trained manpower available, ensuring consistency of policy, unhindered repatriation of profits and expeditious approvals for investments; and the provision of attractive incentive packages. Domestic investment will be encouraged to further develop indigenous capability.

As a small open economy, Malaysia is committed to a pro-growth and business-friendly policy and will ensure that its development strategy continues to be private sector-driven. This liberal trading regime, which has been Malaysia's hallmark as a trading nation, will be pursued vigorously as the country seeks to become a developed nation in its own mould, by 2020.

thePublic Relations Challenges

RETHINKING CAPITALISM

As a Financial Communicator, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad brought to the general population an understanding of complex financial services. He communicated the unethical financial practices happening around the world so that the people would understand and wake up, and to some extent, he did so at the expense of his own popularity.

When he addressed delegates at the 1997 IMF Meeting in Hong Kong, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad spoke up on the dangers of currency speculation, and specifically mentioned George Soros – the international trader reported to have triggered the assault on the regional currencies and stock markets in Asia in particular. The Prime Minister's stunning diagnosis was capped by his call on the IMF to ban currency trading, saying "Society must be protected from profiteers. Currency speculation should be made illegal". A year and a half later, the consensus has swung around overwhelmingly in support of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. It appears that even his decision to abandon IMF's solutions to deal with the crisis has reaped positive results for the economy. In the Prime Minister's own words: "The IMF's medicine to deal with the crisis is worse than the disease itself." The latest *mea culpa* from the IMF that "yes, we were wrong" more than confirms Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's position.

The attacks on the currencies and stock markets by mainly American speculators have raised doubts about the benefits of open market globalisation and the borderless world. Even the IMF has many times failed to handle the effects of such attacks, which wreak havoc on the countries specifically and the world generally. Clearly the IMF cannot be

regarded as an effective guardian of the world's finances; nor can the present global financial regime guarantee no more attacks by currency traders on the economies of countries in order to rake in huge profits.

Currency trading is said to be 20 times bigger than world trade. Whereas world trade creates businesses, jobs, insurance, freight transportation and a host of other activities, there is very little to account for the benefits of currency trading other than incredible profits for the traders and shareholders of hedge funds. As the 1997 crisis showed, the effects of extreme currency trading have been severe impoverishment of countries and regions, and political and social instability.

As Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has continued to expound, the world needs to rethink the International Financial regime. A key question he has constantly posed in his communication is whether currency traders should be allowed to determine the exchange rates of our money or should we find a new mechanism to determine the exchange rate?

GLOBALISATION WIELDS DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

Malaysia's approach to globalisation has been guided by the basic principle that the pace of globalisation must be on Malaysian terms, based on its circumstances and priorities. In the words of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad: "Just as absolute freedom leads to anarchy, so too, absolute globalisation could lead to chaos, as demonstrated by the recent financial crisis."

According to him, developing countries need to seriously think about globalisation and its impacts and to devise a strategic response to the challenges it would pose. Blind acceptance of globalisation in its ideological form is naive and downright dangerous, and the glorious promises of globalisation are yet to materialise. "A reckless approach to trade liberalisation without due consideration for one's own ability to cope will only contribute to a vicious cycle of trade and balance of payments deficits, financial instability, debt and recession, not to mention the social costs of dumping and general economic erosion," he exhorts, adding that "To equate globalisation with a guarantee for economic advancement is a gross oversimplification of the realities that surround international trade. Despite the best of intentions and most progressive macroeconomics policies of developing nation, better trade performance does not necessarily translate increases in living standards. Given the international division of labour, where high-priced goods are produced by advanced nations of the world, and the production of low-valued items are relegated to developing nations, the terms of trade for developing countries are almost always unfavourable."

The call consistently made in Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's communication on financial and economic issues is for developing countries to band together, to develop a new way of thinking, a new paradigm, so to speak, to prepare to face the challenges of globalisation and nation-building in the era of digitalisation. One option is for developing countries to engage in smart partnerships — a concept that could help developing countries unify their concerns and actions. Furthermore, it would help them develop a common stance on issues affecting their collective interest. Thus they could also develop a common stance against the negative forces of globalisation. In all, the smart partnership dialogue can also serve as an avenue for developing countries to share views and experiences.

There is a growing demand for the rules of globalisation to be rewritten, to make it work for people and not just for profits. It is estimated that a fifth of the world's people living in the industrialised countries have 86 percent of the world's GDP, 82 percent of the world's export markets and 68 percent of Foreign Direct Investment. The bottom fifth, living in the poorest countries, have only about 1 percent of each category.

Proponents of globalisation argue that those countries which open will experience such dynamic economic development, that within the foreseeable future, the world will see a convergence between the rich and the poor.

However, what is happening today is that globalisation has brought on worldwide monopolies of certain businesses by a few giant corporations — mainly from the West. In the probable future there will be at most five banks, five automotive companies, five hyper markets, five hotel chains, five restaurants chains etc, all operating worldwide. The small and medium-sized companies in these fields, maybe others, may well be absorbed by these Western-owned international giants which are claimed to bring about efficiency, lowering costs through economies of scale.

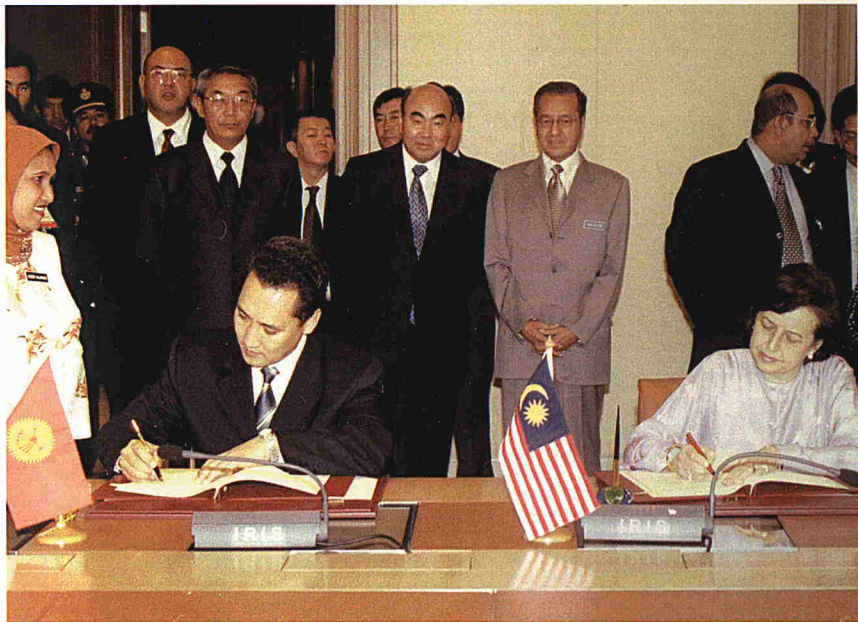
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PUBLIC BANK
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Excellence Is Our Commitment

The President of Kyrgyz, Askar Akayev and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad witnessing the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between Chairman of National Bank of Kyrgyz Ulan K. Sarbanov (seated, left) and Governor Bank Negara Malaysia Tan Sri Zeti Akhtar Aziz (seated, right) at the Prime Minister's Office





The Ministry of International Trade & Industry awarded the Industry Excellence Award for the Services Export Excellence Category to Public Bank, Chairman & Founder of Public Bank Tan Sri Dato' Sri Dr Teh Hong Piow receiving the award from the Prime Minister, Y.A.B. Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at Hotel Istana Kuala Lumpur 27 October 1994

WorldClass Public Relations Practices

MASTERS OF OUR OWN DESTINY

In his 2003 New Year message, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said: "Malaysians may not be able to change the world but they are masters of their own destiny." His combative spirit and boldness in communicating his unconventional yet practical ideas and policies have indeed earned him a place in history as a champion for the Third World.

TELLING THE TRUTH

The media is a powerful institution. It can remove governments, and it can entrench them. It can be free, or it can be controlled by the state, or by business interests. In the end, like anything else, an institution is controlled by its ownership.

Perhaps, by the very nature of the freedom of the press as defined in the western world, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad viewed the harsh criticisms of him as being a result of his low regard for the international or, as he puts it, the Western media. In the end though, such critical portrayal would have to be analysed against his views and staunch belief of what he thought was best for his country.

CUTTING ACROSS ALL RACES OR CREED

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's vision and goals have been for the masses. They cut across all races and creed. Central to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's iconography of power has been Vision 2020: a millennial symbol of growth, wealth-creation and nation-building. In seeking to achieve economic maturity and NIC (newly industrialised country) status by that year, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad sought to galvanise public imagination through ideas of a shared vision of prosperity. The vision represents not only the challenge of economic development but the very ideal of national unity.

INNOVATIVE AND ALWAYS LOOKING FOR NEW WAYS

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's penchant for introducing new thinking and trends for the nation and the world is perhaps most well-known in one of his earliest policies: "Look East". Commenting that the West had lost its balance – still wanting the good life but unprepared to face the realities of a world market it could no longer dominate – Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has instead turned his focus east. The truly indispensable elements of the Japanese "economic miracle" he said, were their moral and cultural pillars: a strong work ethic, worthy Eastern values, a capacity for learning, courage to compete, self-reliance, and national pride – messages which he has consistently and constantly spelled out time and over again in his role as the leading communicator for Malaysia. In time perhaps, the country would be able to track and measure the success of his relentless communication.



The HQ of the Bank which received the 'Best Local Bank in Malaysia 2003' Award for the fifth consecutive year by Finance Asia magazine – Public Bank



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad (center) in a group photo session (from left to right) Institute of Strategic and International Studies chairman Tan Sri Dr Mohd Noordin Mohd Sopiee; Chief Executive of Harwood Timber Sdn Bhd Tan Sri Bujang Mohd Nor; Finance Ministry secretary-general Tan Sri Dr Samsudin Hiam; Governor of Bank of Indonesia, Dr Syahri Sabirin; Governor of Central Bank of Iran Dr Mohsen Noorbakhsh; Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan Dr Ishtarat Husain; Governor of Bank Negara Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz; Governor of Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency Hamad Al-Sayari; Governor of Bank of Kuwait Sheikh Sakum Abdulaziz Al-Sabah; Deputy Governor of Bank of Sudan Mohamed El Fathi Zein El Abdein Mohammed; Head of Investment Business, Financial Institution Supervision Directorate of Baharin Monetary Agency A. Rahman Mohd Al-Baker and President of Islamic Development Bank Dr Ahmad Mohamed Ali after signing the Articles of Agreement of the Islamic Financial Services Board

One for the Album. At the end of the farewell dinner for Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah hosted by the Association of Banks in Malaysia

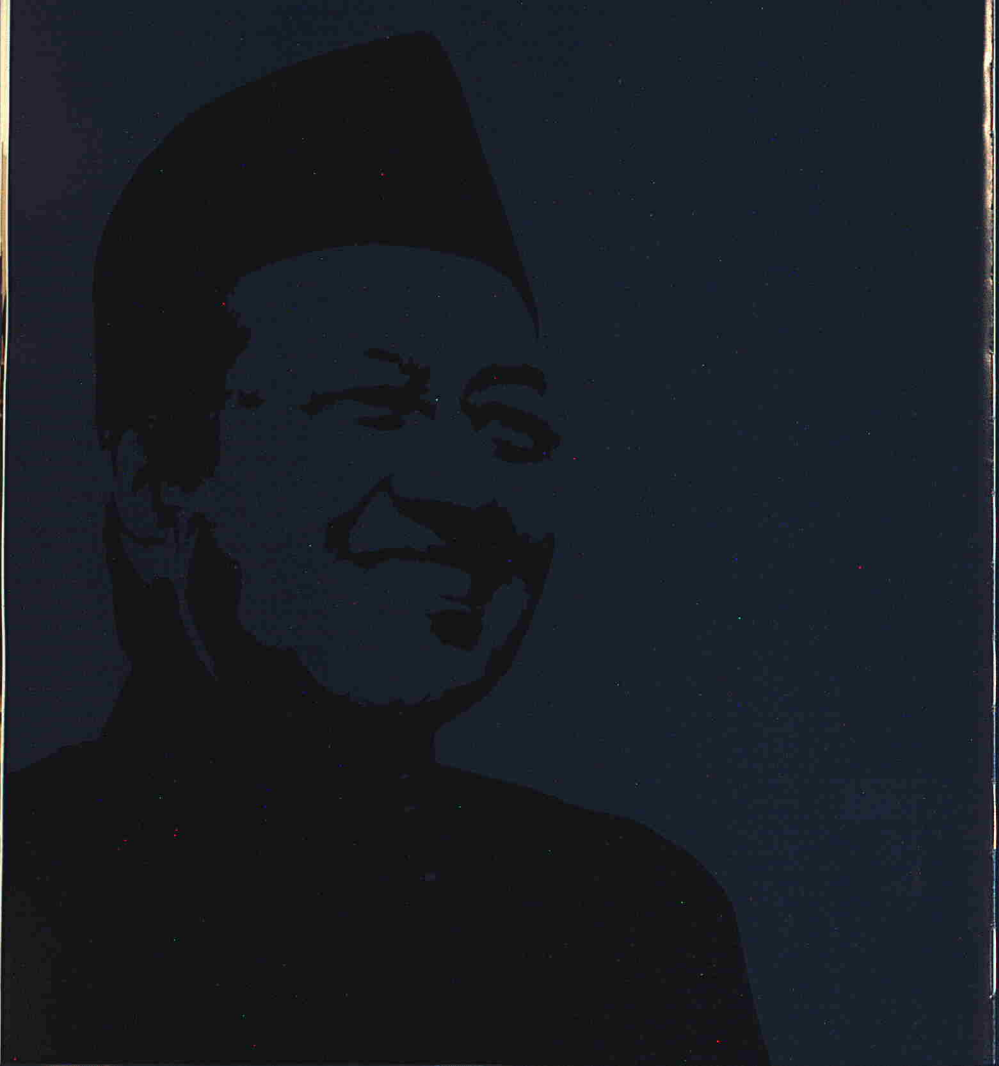


About The Writer

Sharifah Rozita was formerly the Director, Corporate and Regulatory Affairs of British American Tobacco Malaysia. She spent almost seven years in that capacity, responsible for managing strategic corporate issues and communications in the country's largest tobacco company. She is currently Associate Director, School of Communication Taylor's College.

She started her career as a journalist with *The New Straits Times* in 1980. Based in Kuala Lumpur, she then wrote on domestic politics and Asean affairs and honed her socio-political analytical skills during almost 10 years in the journalism world. In 1989, she joined Esso Malaysia, and served the oil corporation as Communications Manager until 1993, when she left to head the corporate and government relations practice of Burson-Marsteller, a well-established international public relations consultancy. In 1995, Sharifah joined Otis Elevator International as its Regional Communications Manager, responsible for communications and public affairs strategies and activities for Otis companies in the 10 Southeast Asian countries. In late 1996, she joined the then Malaysian Tobacco Company. During her tenure as Corporate and Regulatory Affairs Director, she saw through its merger with Rothmans Malaysia to create British American Tobacco Malaysia. She opted to retire early from the hectic pace of the tobacco and corporate sector in June 2003. She now spends some of her time at a well-established local higher education group in Malaysia, sharing her experience and expertise to help develop future communications professionals.

Sharifah has a BA (Hons) in Mass Communications from Universiti Sains Malaysia and an MA in International Relations from The American University, Washington DC.



Contribution to **Consumer** Relations

by Tengku Marina Badlishah

Contribution to Consumer Relations

Tengku Marina bt. Tunku Dato Seri Annuar Badlishah, Group Corporate Affairs Manager of Nestlé (Malaysia) Berhad, shares her perspective on how consumer relations and practices in Malaysia has developed under the tenure of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Introduction:

The **FATHER** of MODERN-DAY **MALAYSIA**

Vision 2020 sees "a confident Malaysian society, infused by strong moral and ethical values, living in a society that is democratic, liberal and tolerant, caring, economically just and equitable, progressive and prosperous, and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient." – Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

MALAYSIA BOLEH sums up the aspirations of our beloved former Prime Minister for the nation. Improving the lives of the *rakyat* was always top of his agenda and with this in mind, he developed Vision 2020. He also introduced consumer-friendly policies and national projects to benefit as many Malaysians as possible. The national car project is a legacy that will live on with Malaysia now proud of its PROTON, which has found success, not only within its shores but with consumers abroad as well. To complement this foresight, Malaysians enjoy the comfort and safety of our well-managed highways, another project influenced by our former Prime Minister to enhance the lives of motoring consumers.

Often described as the father of modern-day Malaysia, his vision to move Malaysia into a knowledge-based economy led to the realization of the Multimedia Super Corridor, which he believes "represents a new paradigm in the creation of value for the information age." It is a challenge for Malaysians – corporations and consumers alike, to embrace the knowledge-based economy for the opportunities and competitiveness it offers or risk being left behind.

Take the mobile telephone as an example. With more than eight million subscribers in the country, the age of wireless telephony is upon us bringing information technology convenience in the palm of consumers. Then there's the Internet, which offers us the world through our PCs and the consumer is empowered to enjoy a host of services, products, information and more at their convenience, with speed and at competitive rates.

Consumers in a **BORDERLESS** WORLD

We live in challenging times. The world as we know it has changed forever since the 11 September 2001 incident. Since the late 80s, consumers all over the world face further uncertainties in the global order with international trade policies changing the marketplace, environmental degradation due to unsustainable consumption patterns, the Middle East crisis, the diminishing role of the United Nations, the challenge of nuclear powers, an increase in white collar crimes, the threat of borderless health epidemics – which continue to threaten political, social and economic stability around the world.

However, in Malaysia, the government under the tenure of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, has consistently given priority to consumer welfare and consumer protection as part of its development agenda. The government recognized that institutional mechanisms were central to address the growing problems of a consumer oriented society in the globalised marketplace.

In response to calls made by the Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (FOMCA), an umbrella body of consumer associations in the country, the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs was created in 1990 to institutionalize consumer protection in the country.

The government also went on to set up the Consumer Affairs Council at state and District level and the National Consumer Advisory Council as institutions that would boost consumer welfare in settling disputes and promoting consumer education.

In addition to the institutional mechanisms, the government also undertook various measures to enhance consumer protection through legislative mechanisms.

Rapid development and globalization has brought on new transactions, practices and consumer relationships which are not adequately covered by earlier laws and in keeping with the tandem, the government through the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs has in the past 13 years of its existence reviewed and enacted some 30 statutes/legislations relating to consumer protection elements.

For example, the Direct Selling Act 1993 and the Consumer Protection Act 1999 were enacted to address major consumer problems such as the "get rich quick" schemes, misleading advertisements and claims on products and removal of hazardous products in the marketplace through product recalls and mandatory product compliance to agreed Malaysian or international standards.

Advertising, labeling and claims made by businesses on the benefits of the product on the packaging must be responsible and honest to ensure that when consumers choose their product, it is an informed choice. Besides protecting the product itself in terms of safety and quality, the packaging also serves as a useful communication tool. The packaging is an ideal opportunity to bond with consumers – to assure them that they made a good choice, provide information on new or different ways to use the product or simply to highlight the benefits of the product. Take a cereal box as an example, the back of the box usually contains information, which may be beneficial or interactive – providing useful tips or simply a suggestion to reuse or recycle the box.

One of the most controversial piece of legislation that the government has enacted (as it contradicts the spirit and principles of free trade) but most supported by the ordinary man on the street for the past 20 over years is the Price Control Act that seeks to put a ceiling price to 22 essential items for consumers such as rice, sugar, flour, margarine, cooking oil, etc thereby ensuring "access to food by all", irrespective of economic status, gender, creed or colour. Those vendors found hoarding food or increasing food prices exorbitantly especially during festival seasons are penalized by the government.



YAB Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed pledging his support for the Malaysian Contingent of the 2001 SEA Games in the MILO® "Malaysia Boleh" signature campaign

WORLD CLASS

Consumer Relations in **PRACTICE:**

Integrating consumer policies with national

DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

The government has adopted various aspects of the UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection 1985, (an international framework which governments can utilize for the elaboration and strengthening of consumer protection policy and legislation) in developing policies related to consumer health and safety, right to make informed choices, the need for effective re-dress mechanism and access to basic needs such as food, water, shelter, and healthcare over the years. The government under Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad recognized that consumer policies need to be integrated with national development policies to enhance the quality of life of consumers and this is clearly evident in the 8th Malaysia Plan.

The Eighth Malaysia Plan states that more progress will be made in the area of consumer education and protection over the next ten years through the community and school Consumer Clubs and the Consumer Protection Act 1999 to address concerns of investments, Intellectual Property Rights, the role of the state as well as the economic and social well-being of consumers in Malaysia.

Understandably, the Malaysian government is one of the very few governments in the world that acknowledges and celebrates the National Consumer Day, thereby recognizing the rights of the consumers. Awards are bestowed by the Prime Minister or his Deputy to eminent consumer leaders, most effective consumer organization and most active school consumer club in the nation during the National Consumer week which is celebrated annually from 26 July – 1 August.

The government under Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in order to avoid acrimonious confrontation when dealing with conflicting interests of consumers and business have **prioritized consumer education** as the mechanism to combat the competing interests which has resulted in inequities and exacerbated poverty among the rural poor consumers.

The government through its agency of the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry produces and circulates 20,000 copies of **Consumer Bulletin** covering various consumer concerns such as consumer redress, advertising, consumer safety and health etc on a monthly basis. The government also supports the activities of civil society based consumer groups in carrying out grassroots consumer educational activities.

Furthermore, in line with its education development plans, the Education Ministry set up **Consumer Clubs at secondary schools** and Malaysia is proud to have the highest record in the world today with at least 70% of the Secondary Schools carrying out consumer activities throughout the nation. Realising the importance of moderate sustainable consumption, the Education Ministry since the late 80s has inserted consumer related elements in the school curriculum as part of civic education for students.

In 2001, the Housing Ministry reviewed the legislation pertaining to housing matters called the **'Housing Developers Act'** and amended it to a consumer friendlier 'Housing Development Act 2001'. The amendment was done following the complaints raised by consumers and consumer associations alike on various grievances on housing matters ranging from deposits, defective liability periods, certificate of fitness, progressive payments, etc. The amended Act included a housing tribunal as a venue to dispense with grievances from consumers speedily without any legal representation.

A similar redress mechanism was also set up under the **Consumer Protection Act 1999** called the consumer tribunal to hear cases under the ambit of RM25,000 speedily without any legal representation. The effectiveness of the consumer tribunal is clearly evident with the yearly increase of cases being heard by the Tribunal all over the country.

Two alternative dispute settling mechanisms were set up in the early 90s under the leadership of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, ie the Insurance Mediation Bureau and the Banking Mediation Bureau. The two industries in answering the government's and consumer movement's call for an independent mechanism to hear consumer grievances agreed to establish these mechanisms to settle consumer problems related to the insurance and banking industries respectively. The Bureau headed by independent Mediators have managed to dispense most consumer grievances related to banking and insurance wherein Banks and Insurance business have to adhere to the outcome of the Mediator's decisions.

A classic example of the world class consumer relations in practice is (under the stewardship of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad) the government's acknowledgement of FOMCA's role and involvement in the process of planning, implementing and assessment of policies, legislations and services provided for the protection and welfare of consumers. Consumer associations continuously assist the public to understand their rights and responsibilities as consumers and develop their capacity to assert their interests in the marketplace. The government has recognized the potential of the consumer movement for the common good of the community and it is this potential that saw the growth in consumer activism in the late 80s.

FOMCA's participation at the various Government Committees of National Information Technology Council (NITC), National Economic Action Council (NEAC), National Economic Consultative Council (NECC), National Food Safety Council, National Standards Advisory Board provide checks and balances to ensure consumers' concerns are taken into consideration when policies are made. Such involvement strengthens democracy by making the government's decisions more transparent, accessible and accountable to consumers at large.

Another government policy under the tenure of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, which has augured well for consumers in Malaysia, is the idea of **Malaysian Inc.**, which bonds government and corporate business. Through this concept, dialogue and consultation between government agencies and business groups have increased, improving transparency and cutting bureaucracy. This business-friendly approach attracts foreign direct investment, which is vital for a healthy economy. All this ultimately leads to improved services and products, which serve the public interest. As a consumer in Malaysia, we can enjoy world-class brands at reasonable prices with big corporations setting up business in Malaysia.

There are far too many of the Prime Minister's visionaries and policies to be mentioned. Some have achieved immense success, some have met with criticism and some have not achieved the desired results. No matter the consequence, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was focused on bringing recognition to Malaysia; he was determined to improve the lives of all Malaysian citizens and instill pride in their nation.

RESPONDING TO GOVERNMENT'S CALL, NESTLÉ MALAYSIA ACT AS AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF CONSUMER RELATIONS

Nestlé's experience

"Nestlé caters to billions of consumers around the world. In our business – food and drink – more perhaps than in others, we need a relationship of trust [with consumers] to be successful."

– Peter Brabeck, CEO Nestlé S.A. in an interview with Harvard Business Review, February 2001.

Despite being a multinational, Nestlé's constant effort to keep in touch with the local consumer has endeared the Company's products and brands to almost every household in the country. Local consumer insights allow Nestlé in Malaysia to deliver quality products that are continually relevant to changing consumer lifestyles. Whether it is taste preference, adapting to local religious sensitivities or fulfilling a particular nutritional need, Nestlé presents Malaysian consumers with products that are specially tailored to enhance their lives.

Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in the extensive range of MAGGI culinary aids which are available in many exotic local variants inspired by all three major ethnic groups in the country. Other brands like MILO and KITKAT have also improved the taste of their products to suit local consumer preferences.

In Malaysia, Muslim consumers are assured that the Nestlé products manufactured, imported and distributed by Nestlé Malaysia are certified Halal by JAKIM (Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia). This is another commitment Nestlé offers to its loyal Malaysian consumers.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

At Nestlé, we believe in giving back to the community in the markets where the Company operates. This initiative goes beyond public relations and we are committed to contribute to the host country's long-term, sustainable development.

As the interest in corporate social responsibility grows, our consumers are interested to know about the company behind the products they buy. This is clearly stated in the Nestlé Corporate Business Principles:

"Nestlé recognizes that its consumers have a sincere and legitimate interest in the behaviour, beliefs and actions of the company behind brands in which they place their trust, and that without its consumers the Company would not exist."

As the world's leading food company and with over 90 years of doing business in Malaysia, Nestlé has contributed towards the well-being of Malaysians not only through its high quality products, but it has also played a role in social development, environment conservation and economic advancement. This is our commitment to Nourish Malaysia – to provide all consumers with a total well-being that enhances their lives in body, mind and soul.

The success of any business is reliant on the commitment and the quality of its people. At Nestlé.

“...people are open to dynamic and future oriented trends in technology, changes in consumer habits, business ideas and opportunities...”

from The Nestlé Leadership and Management Principles

Nestlé aspires to deliver
“Good Food, Good Life”
 to all its consumers worldwide.

The biggest challenge for all businesses is to weave the consumer into the heart of the marketing process. Consumer Insight is the discipline that can deliver this change.

Connecting with consumers is the next challenge. With increasing media options available and with the advent of new media – Internet, WAP, SMS, video phones, the digital media have empowered the consumer in a way that mass-market media have never been able to do. It is simply a matter of the right message delivered at the right time in the right environment in the right tone and manner to the right people. Easy in theory, harder in practice. It all begins with an implicit understanding of the consumer.

About The Writer

Tengku Marina is currently the Group Corporate Affairs Manager of Nestlé (Malaysia) Berhad and is responsible for the development and implementation of all public related-matters for the Nestlé Group in Malaysia including reputation management, corporate communications, media and external relations, corporate social responsibility, issues management, public relations, event management and more.

During her 15 years at Nestlé, Tengku Marina also served at the Nestlé Headquarters in Vevey, Switzerland as Issues Analyst in the Public Affairs Department. Here she gained international exposure as well as accumulated knowledge and experience in a global environment, serving the different Nestlé markets around the world. Whilst in Switzerland, she was given the opportunity to attend international conferences held at the United Nations in Geneva and met with senior officers at the International Chamber of Commerce in Paris.

France during a familiarisation visit. Tengku Marina also spent some time in Nestlé UK as part of her training development.

Besides her responsibilities at Nestlé, Tengku Marina is actively involved in non-governmental organisations to provide and share professional input with organisations such as the Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Business Council of Sustainable Development, and the Pan Pacific & South East Asian Women's Association. She is currently the President of the International Association of Business Communicators in Malaysia, which promotes the professional development of business communicators.

Personally, Tengku Marina holds a degree in Political Science from the UK. She is married with two sons aged 12 and 9 years. In her leisure time, she enjoys recreational activities with the family, reading and social golf.





Role Model
for Malaysia's
Labour and
Industrial Relations

by J.D. Lovrencic

Role Model for Malaysia's Labour and Industrial Relations

In the context of Industrial Relations, Public Relations involves the successful shifting of perceptions and emotions from being hostile, prejudiced, apathetic and ignorant into being sympathetic, more accepting, interested and informed.

The role of Public Relations here is categorically dependent on personality, charisma and leadership. In order to be effective, the practice must be anchored on honesty and be driven by a clear vision of the Big Picture.

It essentially demands an innate ability to soar like an eagle yet land like a dove, as one has to successfully 'talk to the head and sell to the heart'.

The fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia, YAB Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad indeed has left his indelible mark as a Public Relations role model for Malaysian labour/industrial relations in the last two decades of its history.

During his tenure as Prime Minister, the country witnessed tremendous growth. With economic expansion, there came about growing expectations amongst employees matched with a fast expanding enterprise.

Unions representing both the civil service as well as the private sector played a vital role towards championing the interests of the expanding workforce in the country. Expectations grew beyond mere wages and retirement demands. Better working conditions, better lifestyles, and justifiable relationships and benefits were some of the emerging interests amongst employees while productivity, a stable workforce and cost containment were the concerns of employers.

Meanwhile, as the country raced relentlessly with other emerging economies, the government also had the obligation to ensure that the 'temperatures' of industrial relations were effectively maintained in order to continue to attract foreign investment into Malaysia, especially for key industries.

The key to achieving industrial harmony through Public Relations under such challenging times would be:

1. The ability to lead the way for contesting parties to reach a settlement that would serve in the best economic interest of the investor/entrepreneur, the employees, and the country's long-term agenda for sustainable growth.
2. The commitment to eliminate or minimise the risks of industrial strikes and maintain a competitive advantage in the region.
3. The willingness to take pains to understand issues and concerns of all involved parties while holding steadfast to the future of the country - Vision 2020.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's winning Public Relations tactics in addressing labour/industrial relations issues, concerns and needs are obvious:

- Despite the damaging effects of the economic and Asian financial crises, Malaysia continued to experience a productive relationship between organisations and their workforce.
- Despite the shrinking employment opportunities and impending layoffs created by rootless corporations that were guided only by market opportunities, there was an absence of large-scale industrial strikes and protests as Malaysians continued to remain focused on the larger picture for stability.
- Despite the rising costs of goods and services, Malaysians were receptive to the calls by the leadership and remained level-headed without making demands that the country could ill-afford.
- Despite the numerous difficulties brought about by the challenges of globalisation as well as the tests during the boom times, unions, workers and management remained receptive towards dispute resolution through non-confrontational efforts, opting for negotiation and allowing arbitration where needed.

All the above are just some of the examples that illustrate how through his capable Public Relations efforts, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad succeeded in strategically bringing about a sustainable mutual understanding between organizations and their publics.

The secret of his Public Relations success can be encapsulated as follows:

- **His strategic approach to the issues, concerns and prevailing needs.**
- **His timely, genuine and transparent approach adopted in addressing potential problems.**
- **His keen willingness to inform as well as to remain informed of on-going concerns and developments.**

YAB Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's skillful execution of Public Relations is best appreciated through the winning outcomes of some of the many episodes punctuating Malaysia's labour/industrial relations experiences in the last twenty years.

the Privatisation Of Pos Malaysia

The Prime Minister's commitment to create Malaysia Incorporated to serve in the best interest of the country's future, led to the 'corporatisation', privatisation and quasi-privatisation of government entities. One such was the Malaysian postal services.

Pos Malaysia was corporatised in 1992. Then in May 2001 the postal world was shaken with the government's decision to sell out its majority shares to a private banking company.

Given the New Zealand and European experiences, much fear and opposition was generated. The battle ahead was not for the faint-hearted as there were six Union Network International Postal affiliates, clerical staff unions and uniformed staff unions rooted in Pos Malaysia.

But with careful planning, networking, relationship building and managed information dissemination, the goal was materialised.

The fact remains that although the government's announcement in 1988 to privatise postal services was met with fierce opposition from the unions, the resistance subsided in 1990.

Unions changed their policy from resistance to influence on the privatisation process. They played their role in assisting to explain the issues to all workers. The Public Relations success was tremendous as only twenty-two workers from a strength of 10,522 chose to opt out.

The subsequent demands that set in, especially for the workforce to change its mindset from that of being a civil servant to a company worker again was no mean feat.

The policy that was adopted, namely "Togetherness – Management & Union Labour" clearly communicated the goodwill, harmony and positive collaboration between workers, management and the unions.

The success of Pos Malaysia is attributed to the courage and sheer determination of the Prime Minister. His exemplary leadership and his Public Relations capabilities motivated the affected parties and paved the rough road, eventually leading to the successful privatisation of POS Malaysia.



The Prime Minister tours Pos Malaysia on the occasion of the Official Opening of Pejabat Pos Besar Kuala Lumpur on 29 October 1984



Staff of Pos Malaysia Berhad attending the Labour Day Celebrations at Stadium Putra, Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur on 29 July 2002



Staff members of Pos Malaysia presenting a Greeting Card to the Prime Minister on the occasion of the 39th National Day Celebrations

Public Relations Speeches

In the realm of Public Relations practice the ability to speak well and influence the audience decisively with resounding conviction is an imperative skill.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad stands out as a commendable role model. Through all his speeches, he has successfully garnered the support and understanding of the Malaysian workforce and their representative unions.

The Prime Minister through his Speeches at Labour Day celebrations demonstrated his outstanding ability to communicate, comment on and tackle crucial and even controversial issues and concerns with great success.

At the 13th national Workers' Day celebrations at Stadium Putra in Bukit Jalil, the Prime Minister spoke in a very candid and down-to-earth manner that Malaysians from all walks of life could relate with. For example, on the issue of demands for a five-day workweek, he quipped, "But believe me, if we made all Saturdays off-days, some people will take off after Friday prayers".

Likewise, his non-confrontational approach in arriving at solutions is yet another characteristic of Public Relations par excellence.

Speaking at various local, regional and international platforms for example, YAB Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was consistent, clear and logical in addressing concerns of unemployment and wage increase demands.

While educating on the need for productivity and the importance of having the right attitude, he championed the importance of discussions, negotiations and arbitration in settling disputes and grievances in contrast to the confrontational approach as popularly practiced by the West.

Speaking at the official launch of the inaugural Union Network International-Asia Pacific Regional Conference in Kuala Lumpur in June 2003:

- **He told the 500 delegates of the importance of taking a non-confrontational approach to resolving differences and meeting demands. He advised that disputes and demands should be handled via negotiations and, if need be, through arbitration by third parties.**
 - **The Prime Minister reiterated that negotiations should be fair and that everybody should be given a hearing as labour issues affected millions of lives.**
 - **He further warned workers not to price themselves out of their jobs.**
-

Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad with TWU General Secretary, Senator Zainal Rampak during the 90th International Labour Conference in Geneva in June 2002



Another vital aspect of the practice of good Public Relations is the ability to be decisive, clear, simple, logical, yet non-controversial in managing the media when it comes to giving impromptu responses on labour issues.

The Prime Minister has time and time again demonstrated his well-honed Public Relations capabilities in managing the delicate balance of maintaining understanding and relationships, especially when facing the media.

One such fine example would be the issue concerning mandatory medical check-ups raised by Cuepacs, the umbrella body for civil service unions:

Cuepacs President Datuk M. Siva Subramaniam was reported to have said that Cuepacs would propose to the government that medical check-ups be made mandatory for its 900,000 civil servants when they crossed age 40. This proposal apparently was based on a report that nearly forty percent of Malaysians suffered from chronic diseases.

- **When asked to comment, the Prime Minister's response to the media was uncluttered and pacifying in nature.**
- **In asking Cuepacs to be clearer in its proposal, he said that it must be studied carefully so that its objective was transparent and clear to avoid problems in future and was not to just satisfy one or two parties.**

Communicating **Clearly** and **Bonding** Relations

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has a track record for giving emphasis to and himself practicing clear communication and relationship bonding.

The Public Relations role in promoting industrial harmony hinges on this cardinal principle of the free and frank exchange of ideas without losing focus of the larger agenda.

In his Inauguration Speech of the Malaysian Business Council (February 28, 1991), which was set up to achieve productive collaboration between the public and private sectors, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in no uncertain terms spelt out that:

"We cannot remove misunderstanding and roadblocks to productive cooperation if we fail to communicate clearly".

"If practical options and strategies are to come forth there must be a free and frank exchange of information and ideas".

"(We) speak and listen intently with an open heart and an open mind".

Similarly, speaking at the Official Opening of the 1st Union Network International Asia Pacific Regional Conference in Kuala Lumpur recently, he used the platform tastefully in bonding relationships with the union.

In urging the UNI to play its part, he advised, "Your network must help in the reshaping of the interpretation of globalisation so that inequalities between class and class, nations and nations are replaced by a system which ensures fairness and justice for all. Only then will there be jobs and justice in a global world".

Conclusion

It is incumbent on the government to ensure that a country enjoys a stable workforce as much as it must ensure that exploitation is eradicated while wages are maintained at reasonable and affordable levels.

YAB Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in leading the government in the last two decades had successfully ensured that the fabric of Malaysia's workforce and its public and private enterprise was kept unsoiled.

His tactful use of Public Relations in maintaining labour/industrial harmony in the country remains an edifying legacy for the Public Relations profession.

As in the words of Abraham Lincoln,

*"Public sentiment is everything....
With public sentiment nothing can fail;
Without it, nothing can succeed.
He who moulds public sentiment goes
deeper than he who executes statutes
or pronounces decisions. He makes
statutes or decisions possible or
impossible to execute."*

The fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia has indeed emulated the fundaments of excellent Public Relations in bringing about an exemplary balance in the country's history of labour/industrial relations over two decades.

Above all his acute sensitivity to issues, concerns and needs and the innate ability to think on his feet without losing focus on the larger agenda, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has performed remarkably well as a Public Relations role model.

His unflinching ability to explain, educate and get the public to accept a reconciliatory approach to duels are formidable examples of good Public Relations practice at work.

In a nutshell, his entire persona, commitment, resolute will and outstanding success in getting workers and employers to understand, agree and move in a certain direction for good of the nation as a whole, renders Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad as a blue chip Public Relations role model for Malaysia's labour/industrial relations.



About The Writer

J.D. Lovrencic is one of the Founder Members and chief architect of the Asian Public Relations Academy (apra) – a legacy organisation driven by a long term commitment to make Malaysia the centre of excellence for communication and public relations practice in the Asian region. He is currently apra's Managing Director.

He has more than twenty years experience in the public relations profession, having served the manufacturing, healthcare, accounting and education sectors in senior appointments.

J.D. Lovrencic was an active Member of the Institute of Public Relations Malaysia (IPRM), having served in Council and as Chairman of its Education Committee and the Professional Practice Management Committee, and more recently as its Honorary Secretary.

He is a product of College General Penang, affiliate to Urban University (Rome), where he completed his tertiary studies in Philosophy and Religion (1976-1979).

He is also a regular contributor to the Letters-to-the-Editor column in the English newspapers (The Sun, The Star and the New Straits Times), and has more than two hundred of his letters on social concerns published in the last two years.



Dr M and Media Relations

by Rash Behari Bhattacharjee

Dr M and Media Relations

PUBLIC RELATIONS DEFINED:

The management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a programme of action to earn public understanding and acceptance.

From time to time, temperatures can run extremely high when the mass media focuses its attention on the latest issue that is in the public eye.

One such situation exploded when the Ministry of Information introduced a rule that all announcements on vernacular programmes in the electronic media must be in Bahasa Malaysia. The purpose, said Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, the minister at that time, was to promote the usage of the national language, particularly in the official media.

Matters relating to culture, language and religion are naturally highly sensitive in any situation, more so in Malaysia's polyglot society. National leaders from all the communities spoke up for their respective constituencies, and each day the newspapers gave these leaders' opinions their due importance in terms of premium space. The mood that built up could be described as "rather inflamed".

When emotions threatened to come to a boil, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad intervened with a simple press conference that defused the angry confrontation, demonstrating a fine example of public relations as a science and an art.

At an appropriate moment, the Prime Minister played to the press and government officials gathered, a tape recording of a Chinese radio show host introducing in Bahasa Malaysia the song that he would play next. The unfortunate mispronunciations that littered the announcer's comments were so jarring to the ears that the gathering soon dissolved into laughter.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had made his point. "Surely," he told the press when some composure was restored, "we don't want our language to be massacred like that? Why don't we allow them to continue using their own language on their own shows?" And the matter, said a senior editor who was present during the occasion, ended there.

When Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad first became prime minister in 1981, however, the press were somewhat uncomfortable with his sardonic style. It took a year or two, perhaps with some help from his image managers, for him to moderate his media persona to a level that journalists were comfortable with.

Partly because of this trait, perhaps, local journalists have tended to approach him as a group, rather than individually. For one thing, they would never know when he might turn a question on its head and present the hapless inquirer with its paradoxical antithesis. Better to have your colleagues around to help you to sidestep a syllogistic slingshot than to be stammering sheepishly under his aquiline attention.

In spite of his acerbic wit, or rather because of it, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is always sought after by the press because he can be counted on to provide reporters with a quotable quote that could turn the most pedestrian of official functions into the front page news of the day. Indeed, when Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad speaks, the international press too cocks an ear, because he could be about to give a dressing down to some Western institution, like the International Monetary Fund, for instance.

Famously iconoclastic, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has taken aim at a wide range of entities, from "rogue" money market raiders to neo-colonialist cabals and hypocritical globocops. In his preface to "Reflections on Asia", Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad lets fly a double whammy in typical fashion at the Western media and the West's hegemonic culture:

"The world is dominated by Western values and practices. Take the media, for instance. In the Western media, freedom means the right not only to report on matters of interest but also to distort and lie in favour of Western hegemony. The Western media have abused the freedom they have been given. And they resent any criticism against these abuses. It is therefore difficult for a Third World leader to be reported truthfully in the West."



Budget speech - 24 October 1998

A perusal of reports about Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad by the Western media does lend credence to his virulent dislike for their methods. For instance, a statement by an *Asiaweek* reviewer that, "His (Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's) capacity for provocation is perhaps his greatest attribute," only undermines any claim the publication could make to objectivity. Surely the architect of the Vision 2020 development blueprint could lay claim to somewhat more notable qualities?

Such slanted views expressed by the Western media have given Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad ample ammunition for discrediting their impartiality. He dismisses their track record in "Reflections on Asia":

"The fact is that the Western press can see nothing right about the Malaysian Government. My propensity to criticise them and Western countries has not endeared me to them. They like to have Asian leaders submit to Western bullying. It is not whether we are democratic or just or fair that they are concerned about. They have been known to support dictators if they are aligned to the West. Their negative reaction is therefore only to be expected. I have long ago ceased to care about what the Western media says about our country."

At the heart of this adversarial relationship that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has had with the Western media is a fundamental difference of opinion about the values that inform Western democracy. On the one hand is the Western view that the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) encapsulates as articulated in Article 19 of the Declaration:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and others have argued that a blanket application of the UDHR would damage the nascent democracies of the Third World. In "The Challenge" (1986), his sequel to "The Malay Dilemma", Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad argues that these rights must be circumscribed by the larger needs of society:

"As an individual he has rights but as a member of society those rights are limited. There are no absolute or unlimited rights for an individual, because when his rights come in conflict with the interests of society, his rights must give way to the 'rights' of society."

In the same treatise, he elaborates on the role of the Western media in serving its hegemonic culture:

"Western imperialism has been effectively perpetuated partly through the activities of the world mass media. The West controls the world mass media because a Western language, namely English, is understood in all parts of the world. Magazines and reports in English are easily read by all, including Eastern nations and newly independent peoples. These reports are also easily and frequently translated into local languages. Thus Western reporters can disseminate their reports throughout the world and shape the world's thinking and attitude regarding a particular incident or nation."

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's views on the dichotomy between Western and Asian perspectives are congruent with those of a number of other leaders, including Tan Sri Dato' Musa Hitam. In a keynote address to a seminar while he was chairman of the UN Human Rights Commission, Musa states:

"The human rights norms propounded in the international instruments are seen as a mere reflection of western philosophical and political tradition and accordingly cannot be effectively applicable in Asian societies. The preposition that these norms equal universal standards is therefore rejected as it tends to raise the western standard as the only and proper standard and to allow one culture and one tradition to monopolise the debate as to the meaning of human rights."

"The Asian critics took issue with the core of rights emphasised as neither fulfilling their most pressing needs nor addressing the roots of oppression. Hence the Asian concept of human rights stressing economic development over civil and political rights and that any process of growth which ignores their fulfillment violates the idea of development. Certain international human rights norms are regarded as incompatible with their cultural and religious values."

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad responding to questions from the Malaysian press at the Hermitage Hotel at the end of his two-day visit to Monaco



It is in this context that the Malaysian Government has allowed limited press freedom in the country. Observers agree that the press is generally free to report on the issues of the day, but where the Government deems that the national interest may be harmed by the unbridled airing of views on sensitive issues, it has put into use a number of stringent laws that restrict the freedom of the press.

During Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's tenure as Prime Minister and Home Minister after the resignation of Tan Sri Musa from the Government, several key laws have been promulgated that have a direct and indirect bearing on the media. The Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 imposes strict licensing requirements on any newspaper whether regular or irregular, and given free or sold. The Broadcasting Act 1988 preserves broadcasting as the exclusive privilege of the government, and a licence is required for any kind of broadcasting.

Another important legislation is the Official Secrets Act 1972 which provides for imprisonment and/or fines for possession of information classified from "Restricted" to "Top Secret". This creates a formidable obstacle for the investigative journalist seeking to bring internal government affairs into the public arena. The Sedition Act 1948 also poses a hazard to the press when reporting on matters that may be interpreted as intended "to excite disaffection against any government or the administration of justice". In addition, there is the Internal Security Act 1960 which provides for detention without trial on the grounds of national security.

These strictures aside, Malaysian journalists who have witnessed the Prime Minister's spirited and often vitriolic responses to developments both on the local scene and internationally will find a lacuna on the political stage when he is gone. As a senior editor who has covered countless assignments with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad remarked, "His presence will be sorely missed."

About The Writer

Rash Behari Bhattacharjee is a journalist advocating the citizen's perspective on environmental, sustainable development and consumer issues. He has been associated with the print media for two decades now, serving with the Star, The Malay Mail and now with The Sun, where he is Deputy Sunday Editor. His media career was punctuated by two interludes with consumer groups, first at the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) where he edited their bulletin *Utusan Konsumer*, and then at the International Organization of Consumers Unions (IOCU) where he managed the publications programme of its Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. He has been an editorial consultant, speaker and trainer for numerous public bodies and citizens' groups, especially since 1997, and recently chanced upon the phenomenon called public relations. In addition to articles in numerous local and international publications, he has co-authored *The State of the Consumer in the Asia-Pacific* (1991). R.B. Bhattacharjee holds a B.A. (Hons) in English Literature from Universiti Malaya.





Community Relations at Heart

by Dato' Sharifah Mohd Ismail

Community Relations at Heart

What is Community? Relations ■

Community relations is a general term that probably has different meanings for different people, but within the context of Public Relations (PR), it is about the role a company plays in the wider sphere of the

environment in which it finds itself. Usually, this entails non-profit making activities that benefit the community and which the company undertakes for purely humanitarian reasons, namely to give back to society a little of what it has benefited from it.

In certain countries, the idea of community relations is fairly entrenched in the local business philosophy – almost every organisation worth its salt is expected to play its part in the community. This is quite true in the United States (US), for example, where large corporations spend a little over one per cent of their pre-tax profits on what they call corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes, a form of community relations. Meanwhile, top companies in Japan have formed the One Percent Club, named quite simply because each member contributes one per cent of its profits towards charitable endeavours. In the United Kingdom (UK), again, community relations is nothing new, although contribution rates are slightly lower, at roughly 0.5 per cent to one per cent.

While some argue CSR goes against the grain of the whole ethos of business – namely to make profits – others maintain that it does actually improve the standing of a company. Stakeholders are more likely to view such a company in a positive light, job seekers are more likely to want to work in a caring company, customers are more likely to use the services of this company... The list goes on. A Mori poll conducted in the mid-90s in the UK, surveying 800 full-time workers, found that 60 per cent would work for a company that was active in the community where it operated; more than half in fact said they would “strongly prefer” to work in such a company.

Commenting on these results, Sir Allen Sheppard, Chairman and Group Chief Executive of International Consumer Products Group Grand Metropolitan, said they “underscore an important point that is all too often misunderstood. Corporate community involvement is not simply ‘charity’, it is good business. It is also arguably the most powerful tool available to management in getting the most from the workforce.”

In Malaysia, as in most of South-East Asia, the concept of community relations is only just beginning to gain a foothold in the corporate arena. That is not to say corporate organisations in the region have never done good for society; it's just that such activity has not in general formed part of a company's overall business plan or model. There can be no doubt that even without structured policies, organisations with conscience have given, and generously, to worthy causes. But this would have been on an ad hoc basis, as and when approached for funds. Such companies in all likelihood would not have had a fixed budget for such action, and there would not have been any planning or strategising on the what, where, who, why or how of their social service agenda.

But the situation is changing, slowly it is true, yet also surely. And the man who has created a socio-political environment which supports this gradual transformation is none other than Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. Though a medical doctor by training, his years at the helm of the nation have proved he is naturally endowed with many skills and characteristics that go towards making an excellent PR man – one who is sensitive to prevailing circumstances as well as an excellent communicator (Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is known to have written many of his memorable speeches himself), motivator and strategic thinker. And, speaking from a PR point of view, his efforts to promote community relations have been highly commendable.



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in a "Cyclethon" from Taman Sri Nanding to Pekan Batu 14, Hulu Langat – 24 July 1992

As a result of the community relations projects initiated by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's government, as well as those carried out by corporations as a result of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's policies and incentives that inspire such actions, there have been drastic changes in the national landscape, not just physically, but also in the way we think and act. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say, because of the kind of community relations he has engendered, we as a nation have developed emotionally, socially and psychologically.

DIRECT CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY

All Prime Ministers are in privileged positions of being able to steer nations along desired pathways. Hng Hung Hong, author of *CEO Malaysia, Strategy in Nation-Building*, draws an appropriate analogy by comparing a Prime Minister to the Head of a large corporation (his "company" being the country); it is he who decides on the policies and strategies to effect change. But not all political CEOs have been able to use the special position they occupy for the benefit of the nation. Best intentions notwithstanding, many Prime Ministers have failed to achieve the goals they set out for themselves and their cabinet.

What are the kinds of goals that the leader of a country would set? Each nation has its own needs and preoccupations, dictated by factors such as socio-economic status, political system, racial composition, size and density of population, cultural values and history. Therefore, each would have its own agenda. But there is perhaps one common end sought by most national leaders, namely a sense of belonging among the people. Without this, there would be no unity, no feeling of patriotism, and therefore, no real nation. Disregarding all else, if a Prime Minister were able to enhance his people's pride in their citizenship, he would be thought of as having been a good leader. Pride can result from a variety of achievements. In the Malaysian context, it has been built from a growing sense of self, belief in our own skills, knowledge and capabilities, in our ability to learn, adopt and adapt, and finally to stand firm and strong even when the proverbial going gets tough.

For this, we have Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to thank. It was his vision and determination that have created the Malaysia and Malaysians that we are today. A fervent nationalist, he has helped us grow in confidence and shed the remnants of colonial sentiment that for a long time led us to believe in the superiority of the West, their products and intellect. Having inspired Malaysians to evolve from our third world status and mentality into an industrialised nation on the brink of a multimedia and knowledge revolution, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's contribution to the country cannot be questioned. To describe the kind of nation-building he has achieved as community relations may sound trite, but indeed the nation is a community, albeit with 24 million people a very large one, and all that is done for the betterment of the nation can be considered the highest form of community relations.

How has Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad managed to engineer such remarkable change in a country within a relatively short span of 22 years? Having a coherent and realistic game plan certainly helped. During his time at the helm of the country, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad set countless goals for the nation to achieve. But overriding these was a master plan or mission, one that caught all of our imagination and for which he will always be remembered, namely Vision 2020. This vision, which he rolled out in 1991, spelt out very clearly what Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad wanted the nation to achieve politically, socially, economically, spiritually, psychologically and culturally to be a fully developed country by the year 2020. It is this vision that has provided a coherent meta-policy to guide the country as it continues to transform, ensuring at all times that we do not stray far from our main objective.



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad waves to the people as he makes his way through Chinatown, Jalan Petaling to attend a Malaysian Patriotic Gathering, accompanied by Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting, Minister of Housing and Local Government – 30 August 2003



A CARING SOCIETY

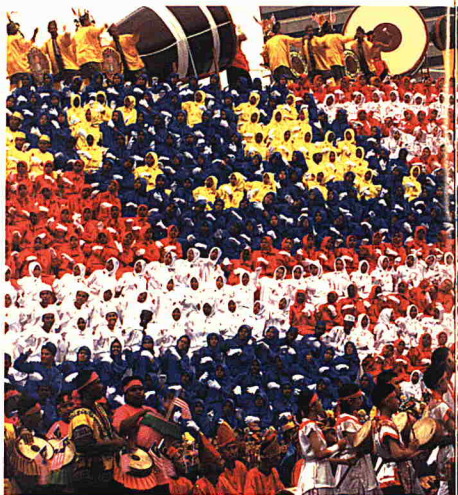
Acting as a blueprint for development in the country over a span of 30 years, Vision 2020 encompasses all aspects relevant to progress. It is, however, testament of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's own values that the Vision includes, indeed strongly emphasises, terms and conditions that promote a sense of social responsibility. The paper states clearly that among several challenges the country has to overcome in order to be fully developed is that "of establishing a fully caring society and a caring culture, a social system in which society will come before self, in which the welfare of the people will revolve not around the state or the individual but around a strong and resilient family system."

The concept was built on and fortified over the years with various tax incentives and other benefits for community work, such as aiding the handicapped, giving priority to health and education, resolving social ills, and elevating the nation's moral and ethical sensibility. As stated in the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000): "Efforts to promote the Caring Society, as an integral component of the value system, will continue to be implemented."

Needless to say, poverty eradication and other programmes to help the financially needy have also formed a significant part of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's agenda. Among these a salient campaign would be the Home Ownership for Low-Income Groups. This incorporates various policies such as the Zero Squatter Policy and Integrated People's Housing Programme for Squatter Resettlement, under which 51,800 units of low-cost flats are to be built by the year 2005 in large cities. These three-bedroom units are to be rented out at low rates, and will be complemented by facilities such as community halls and libraries. To lend their support, banks have been encouraged to provide attractive loan packages for the purchase of such homes, and the Employees Provident Fund allows for the withdrawal of savings by members to help finance their home ownership.

There would be no end to this chapter if all Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's efforts at improving the lot of the nation were to be detailed. To narrow down our scope, let us focus on the following four areas that traditionally fall under the domain of community relations:

- **Enterprise/IT:**
namely helping local entrepreneurs and supporting enterprise in general
- **Education:**
in the sense of promoting new initiatives for young people
- **Arts and Culture:**
as in assisting in the development of artistic endeavours
- **Sports:**
promoting sporting activities for health, promotional, tourism benefits



- 1 Three Malaysian ethnic groups including Malays, Chinese and Indians, perform a Cultural show during the National Day celebration at the Independence Square in Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia marked the 45th anniversary of its independence on Saturday, August 31, 2002 with flashy festivities tempered by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's warning that peace and prosperity would fall apart without "eternal vigilance" and sacrifices
- 2 Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad attending Datuk Seri Samy Vellu's Deepavali open house
- 3 The Prime Minister visiting a paediatric ward



ENTERPRISE/IT

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has an almost intuitive grasp of sound economic basics. From the beginning, he has been very supportive of the private sector, realising that it was free and unregulated enterprise that would be able to inject the economy with the kind of energy and funds needed to propel the country forward. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's concept of Malaysia Inc. inspired by the highly successful Japan Inc of the 80s, allowed the fledgling private sector at the time to expand and mature into the robust, competitive and thoroughly modern, self-reliant organic entity it is today. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was our first leader to introduce the idea of the private sector "driving the nation's engine of growth", thus leaving the government with more time and resources to get on with its public administrative duties.

Even as a young medical doctor in Alor Setar, Kedah, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad recognised that the civil service was not always as efficient as people would have liked it to be. At the time, for example, there were problems with the collection of refuse in town. Night-soil collectors belonging to the Town Council were being given extra money from certain people to give priority to cleaning their areas. As a result, they neglected other areas which were not so lucrative. Upon hearing of the problem, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad wrote a letter to the Town Council, suggesting that they privatise the service. They did, and after some initial skirmishes between the new contractor and the old collectors, the problem was resolved. Both sanitary and sanitary conditions were achieved.

The above incident may not strike the contemporary reader as being particularly interesting, because today the idea of privatisation is well-accepted, almost the norm. But in the 70s, businessmen on the whole were viewed with more than a dose of cynicism. They were thought to be mercenary, solely interested in dollars and cents; and civil servants were not always the most co-operative with them. Thus Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's stand would have surprised many.

While Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has been supportive of private enterprises in general, more recently the emphasis has been on encouraging and nurturing the IT industry. Given that the nation is relatively young and has a lot of catching up to do, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has identified IT as a means literally to "leapfrog" a couple of decades into the multimedia age. Hence, in 1996, the Ministry of Energy, Communications and Multimedia undertook the creation of our Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), a 15km-by-40km stretch of extremely high-tech, tech-friendly infrastructure. The corridor includes "intelligent" office buildings wired for high-speed Internet access, hotels, residential areas, and a multimedia university, all designed to lure world-class technology companies to the region. In the initial stages, attractive incentives were offered for such companies to set up shop in the corridor, such as a 10-year tax-free "pioneer" status, discounted rental leases, and relaxed immigration procedures for the recruitment of staff. This was followed, in 1999, with the setting up of the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, to provide a regulatory framework for this new and exciting development.

But the promotion of IT, or ICT (information and communication technology) as it has become today, is not confined to high-profile, high-capital companies operating out of their intelligent offices in the MSC. The underlying idea is for the nation as a whole to be so completely IT savvy as to incorporate it into our daily lives. As such, much has been and is being done to encourage smaller communities to connect to each other via IT and, in particular, the Net. Towards this end, a Demonstrator Application Grant Scheme (DAGS) was launched by MIMOS to help fledgling organisations and even non-profit making organisations make use of ICT to disseminate information, keep people connected, and also to support their businesses. There are at the moment more than 42 recipients of the grant, who use it for a wide range of projects, from biodiversity investment to nature watching, agriculture, forensic sciences and health.



Multimedia Super Corridor



EDUCATION

Education has been another area of focus in Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's regime. In order for the country to develop, and for its people to provide the skills and knowledge required of a fully developed nation, there has to be a commensurate level of education. Thus we have seen a flourishing in the number of institutes of higher learning – colleges, universities and other training centres. During the Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad years, too, the concept of twinning was introduced, allowing local students to study here for degrees from well-known and well-respected universities abroad. Foreign universities, such as Monash from Melbourne, Australia, have been allowed to set up branch campuses. And, recently, an Open University was launched to provide adults with the opportunity to further their education. Meanwhile, local schools – both primary and secondary – have been encouraged to embrace technology so that students are exposed to IT and its applications from a young age.



IT is fast becoming a favourite subject in schools and universities

The Smart School Project was launched in 1999 for this very purpose. An ambitious RM300 million initiative, the aim is to use the latest technology to complement and enhance lessons, right from Primary One level, making the education experience very much multimedia based. The project was a collaboration of eight local companies and three multinationals, and has proved so successful, there are plans to market the idea abroad. As a result of the project there are more than 90 Smart Schools all round the country, connected not just to the Net but also to each other. Other schools without internet access are visited by mobile cyber centres – buses equipped with computers – on a regular basis.

ARTS AND CULTURE

In seeking to develop the nation, it has been Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's explicit wish that Malaysia should not lose its own culture or sense of identity. Again, as stated in Vision 2020, the objective is not to emulate other developed nations, but to become "a developed country in our own mould", preserving our typically Asian values and traditions. Without these acting as a strong anchor, the country would get lost in a global limbo – a nation with no ties to the past nor cultural foundation from which to advance into the future.



PM at MCA Open House

Tan Sri Francis Yeoh, the managing director of YTL Corporation, once called Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad a "Renaissance Man" because of the way he has transformed the country into a modern Asian nation. While this analogy is accurate, it would be just as true to say of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad that he is a Renaissance man in the more traditional sense of the term, namely in having renewed the nation's interest in the arts. During his premiership, the country saw a flourishing of both local and foreign arts.

The National Art Gallery, which began in 1958 as a collection of 14 artworks housed in borrowed space in the Dewan Tunku Abdul Rahman, today consists of no less than 2,500 pieces showcased in a state-of-the-art building on Jalan Termerloh, off Jalan Tun Razak, Kuala Lumpur. The museum was launched by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad himself on September 16, 2000. Next to it is the RM210 million Istana Budaya, the country's first ever "palace of culture", with a seating capacity of 1,500 people, and where international performances of classical music, operas, musicals and dance dramas are regularly held. Plans for such a national cultural centre surfaced as far back as 1964, but funds materialised only in 1994, during Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's reign. Construction began in 1995, and the complex which also houses the National Theatre, was officially opened by the Prime Minister

on September 15, 1999. One of the functions of the Istana Budaya is "to provide support services to the performing arts", while one of its stated objectives is "to promote the involvement of corporate sponsors" in such arts in Malaysia. As always, private sector funding is encouraged.

Perhaps the best example of private sector involvement in the arts in Malaysia is the setting up of the country's first and only concert hall suitable for philharmonic purposes. The Dewan Filarmonik Petronas, tucked snugly between the two towering structures of the Petronas Twin Towers, boasts the latest technology to enhance the enjoyment of live performances. It has, for example, impeccably sophisticated acoustics, making it a favourite venue for both orchestras as well as audiences. Ever since it was opened in 1998 it has been home to the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra which, according to Time magazine, is one of the best in South-East Asia. It is not just the Dewan that is impressive but the entire Twin Towers that stuns the eye and dominates KL's landscape for its majestic beauty. Petronas spared no effort in creating an architectural wonder that Malaysia could be truly proud of.

Petronas aside, many other organisations have also been playing their part to promote the arts, though perhaps on a smaller scale. As a result, the number of performing groups has increased quite dramatically. From virtual non-existence, we now have The Actors Studio, The Instant Café Theatre, Dramalab, Comedy Court, The Five Arts Centre and too many dance troupes to mention, all of which receive aid from the private sector. Before the consolidation of the financial industry, and hence the disappearance of the Phileo Group, they contributed significantly to the arts, in addition to health and education. A sum of RM500,000 to RM1 million was put aside for community related projects every year, and beneficiaries included The Operafest Children's Choir, The Instant Café Theatre, Taro Dance Theatre and The Five Arts Centre.



The Prime Minister rejoining Malaysia's Marathon Swimmer Abdul Malik Mydin's victory for swimming 48km from Kuala Perlis to Langkawi within 14 hours 3 min and 3 second

SPORTS

Until recently, sports in Malaysia was very low-key. We have always had our share of world-class sportsmen and women who would do the country proud, but more often than not they would win their golds, silvers and bronzes in sports meets or events held elsewhere. The country simply did not have the physical facilities to offer ourselves as a venue for large-scale international sporting events. But the status quo changed in 1998, when Malaysia became the first Asian country to host the Commonwealth Games.

No less than RM561 million was spent on infrastructure for the Games which included building the Bukit Jalil National Sports Complex, 21 other sports venues, an international shooting range in Langkawi, a Doping Centre and an International Broadcasting Centre. Next to the Bukit Jalil sports complex, an Athletes Village was created boasting 1,400 three-bedroom apartments, three clubhouses, and recreational and swimming facilities.

Why the money and effort to promote sports in Malaysia? The most natural and basic reason, as given by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad when launching a fund for the Commonwealth Games, is "that sports is a strong unifying factor, especially important in a multiracial, multilingual, multicultural and multireligious country like ours... This is indeed the basis of our sports policy because we feel through sports we can create a united and healthy nation."



Commonwealth Games in Seminar at Bukit Jalil National Sports Complex

Dr M at the football match between cabinet members and the Backbenchers Club at Stadium Merdeka





Displays of the kind of nationalistic fervour that can be unleashed by sports were indeed seen in the build-up to, and during, the 10-day XVI Commonwealth Games beginning September 11. As the host country of the once-in-every-four-years Games is allowed to come out with its own logo, mascot and design of the baton, nationwide competitions were held for these. Finally, a logo inspired by the national flower – the hibiscus – was chosen; Wira-the-orangutan became the mascot; and a design resembling the gobek, a traditional Malay cylindrical arca nut-pounder, was used for the baton. The country was awash in colours of the national flag while festoons displaying the Games' logo were posted everywhere. The media could not get enough of the athletes and events, and all eyes were plastered on the medal tally. For 10 days the nation was indeed swept in a wave of Commonwealth Games mania which seemed to spare no-one. Malaysia had never experienced anything like it before.

In addition to whipping up sentiments of unity and patriotism, mega sporting events also act to enhance tourism and the economy. Nothing illustrates this better than the Formula One. It is the third most watched live sporting event, after the Olympics and the World Cup, and attracts a proportionately large number of fans who want to watch the race live. Though a relatively expensive sport to host, the spin-offs are even greater. As Melbourne's Sunday Herald Sun put it, "Formula One acts rather like a giant vacuum cleaner that sucks up money at an alarming rate but also brings in annual revenue of more than US\$261.78 million (RM1 billion)."

Given the high costs, not many countries can dream of hosting the F1. Malaysia, in fact, is the first South-East Asian country to have an F1 track. Our 260ha Sepang F1 Circuit (SIC) cost RM286 million to build. But the money was recouped during the inaugural Petronas Malaysian Grand Prix 1999, which saw 80,000 spectators, 60 per cent of whom were foreigners who spent no less than RM500 million while they were in the country for the three-day event. In 2003, the number of spectators is thought to have hit the 100,000 mark, and earnings derived from the event would doubtless have also increased.

Malaysia's foray into the world sporting limelight began in 1996, with Le Tour de Langkawi, which subsequently became known as Telekom Malaysia Le Tour de Langkawi when Telekom Malaysia Berhad became its title sponsor in 2001. The 10-day international bicycle race takes cyclists along the length and breadth of the country, including scenic routes such as the East Coast road, and is the perfect vehicle in which to showcase Malaysia's natural beauty. And Telekom Malaysia sees to it that this opportunity is not missed. Out of a total of RM10 million the national telecommunications company contributes to the cycling event, RM2 million goes towards live coverage broadcast all round the world.

Telekom Malaysia, indeed, is one of a growing number of local corporations adopting the concept of community relations seriously. In addition to Le Tour, it has also been sponsoring towerhorns up Menara KL since 1999. In 2002, the event took on greater

significance when, endorsed by the World Federation of Great Towers (WFGT), it became the inaugural World Tower Run Championship, which is now to be an annual event hosted in turns by WFGT's 22 members – all magnificent towers from countries far and wide.

Looking at the Sepang F1 Circuit, the Bukit Jalil National Sports Complex, Menara KL, the Petronas Twin Towers, Istana Budaya, the National Art Gallery, our Multimedia Super Corridor, Penang Bridge and many, many more, it truly is hard to imagine that, only 22 years ago we were still a predominantly agricultural nation. How Malaysia has changed. It has not just caught up with the times, but is now part of those factors that shape it. Whereas Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had occasion to say in Chicago in 1984 that Malaysia's "location is not very clear to most so that even sensational news about it is dismissed as one of those things typical of underdeveloped countries", today we are very much part of the globalised world.

What we say carries weight, and what we do is often scrutinised. What's more, we now are even in a position to provide the stage on which events of international significance unfold.

Of course, we have got to where we are as a result of numerous plans and policies that have, in retrospect, been appropriate to our particular needs. But two factors that have probably carried extra weight than the platitude of others are: national unity and economic prosperity. Without these, we would have got nowhere. Fortunately, we have had a succession of leaders who have emphasised both points. But Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, being the latest and having been in power the longest, perhaps had greatest impact.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad managed to achieve what he has not only through his own actions, but also by motivating others to follow his lead. He started by empowering the private sector, by providing them with the kind of regulatory aid needed to grow and be competitive. Then, having achieved a critical level in development, he cautioned the very same private sector to do to society what the government had done to it – namely to provide support and promote growth in areas that needed growing such as home ownership, enterprise, education, the arts and sports. In this manner, he has created a wonderfully self-reliant and organic environment in which the government, private sector and community are closely interlinked through symbiotic relationship.

The ultimate aim, as he explained to a group of management consultants back in 1984, was to see the country develop so its people could enjoy a better life. "The Government is not altruistic when it helps business. It has no wish to see one small section of the community wax rich," he said. "As a democratic Government, we are committed to the majority and the majority are relatively poor. If we help the rich, it is because we want to extract from them the riches that they make so that we may redistribute them to the rest."

This he has done, and done so judiciously that while the corporate community has not felt the pinch, the rest of the country has benefited from the exercise in wealth redistribution. The whole of Malaysia is better for Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's win-win strategy. And that, to the mind of this PR practitioner, has been the greatest community relations success story in the country.



About The Writer

The writer is better known for her pioneering contributions to the corporate communications department of Telekom Malaysia beginning 1988. During the 12 years she was at the helm, she initiated, spearheaded and inculcated a communications culture that set the pace and trend for others in the industry to emulate.

Having assisted the huge organization through its many phases of privatization, public listing and then globalisation with its public relations needs, Dato' Sharifah is well-schooled in formulating communications and image positioning strategies as well as developing approaches and programmes nationwide that established rapport between the consumer publics and Telekom Malaysia employees.

She was also responsible for securing several awards for the organization during her tenure as head of the communications department. These included the Best Annual Report (NACRA) for the Industrial Sector for four consecutive years [1996-1999], the Best Contingent for National Day Parade for five consecutive years [1990-1995] and the Corporate Governance Award in 1998.

Dato' Sharifah currently serves as Assistant General Manager, Customer Assistance Service Telekom Malaysia. She has just clocked her 30th year of service.

A doer, she is also the Chairman of the Institute of Marketing Malaysia (IMM), Honorary Treasurer of the Institute of Public Relations Malaysia (IPRM), Advisor to ERA Consumer Malaysia, Board of Trustee in the Federation of Malaysian Consumer Associations (FOMCA), and a member of several other professional organisations including the Call Centre Association of Malaysia (CCAM), the Asia Pacific Marketing Federation (APMF), the World Marketing Association (WMA), the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) and the International Public Relations Association (IPRA).

In 1998 Dato' Sharifah was conferred a Fellowship by the Institute of Marketing Malaysia, the second woman to receive this prestigious award after YB Dato' Seri Rafidah Aziz, the Minister of International Trade and Industry.

A communications icon, Dato' Sharifah holds a diploma in Public Administration and a masters degree in Mass Communications from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM).

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad—

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